

# ARCHAEOLOGY in Northumberland

VOL 22



*Celebrating 25 years  
of Archaeology in  
Northumberland*



# Foreword

As the Council's Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, I am delighted to welcome you to the 22nd edition of *Archaeology in Northumberland*. This issue showcases some of the highlights of recent archaeological work undertaken in Northumberland and, remarkably, celebrates two 25-year anniversaries.

Firstly, it is 25 years since the first issue of *Archaeology in Northumberland* was published in 1991. Over these years the magazine has seen many changes, including embracing full colour, growing in size and becoming available online, but it continues to report on an ever widening range of heritage and archaeological activities carried out across the County. *Archaeology in Northumberland* has also attracted a 'Friends of' group whose members provide invaluable support for the publication of the magazine.

We are also celebrating the 25th anniversary of developer-funded archaeology. When the government introduced guidance on Archaeology and Planning in 1991, it changed the way archaeology was considered. Instead of rescue operations being launched, developers became responsible for ensuring that archaeological remains affected by their proposals were properly investigated. This work has made a huge contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the past and revealed many new and exciting discoveries in Northumberland which have been revisited on pages 4-13.

Alongside this commercially funded work, community interest in the heritage of Northumberland continues to grow. It is particularly pleasing to see an ever-increasing number of local groups exploring their heritage and some of the results of this work are published here, including Altogether Archaeology (page 42), Flodden 500 (page 18), Holystone (page 52), Tynedale North of the Wall (page 32) and the National Park volunteers on the Otterburn Ranges (page 49).

This issue also reports on the final phase of the multi-million pound heritage-led regeneration schemes in Berwick, where tangible improvements to shopfronts and buildings have been accompanied by exciting creative projects recording more ephemeral things, like memories, anecdotes and atmosphere (page 34). With this hugely successful project nearing completion, it gives me great pleasure to report that significant funding has been secured for several new projects in the County. In particular, the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded £1.8million to the Peregrini Lindisfarne Landscape Partnership which started three community projects this year and I look forward to reading about their results in future issues.



**Allan Hepple**  
Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth



# Welcome

At last, welcome to the 22nd edition of *Archaeology in Northumberland*, which again has been a long time in the making. We would like to thank you for your patience as it is almost two years since the last issue was published and this volume introduces a wide range of work that has been carried out between 2013 and 2015.

In that time we have faced a number of challenges, not least of which is the absence of our friend and colleague, Chris Burgess, through long term illness. Without Chris's presence and hands-on design input you will probably notice the look of the magazine has changed a little but we hope that you will find it recognisable and equally attractive. As a slight departure from the usual format, we have published the list of archaeological assessments, evaluations and other work (grey literature) on our website so that we can devote more space in the magazine to topical pieces.

To celebrate our 25th anniversary, and that of developer-funded archaeology in England, we have compiled a special review which showcases the sites that have contributed to our growing knowledge and understanding of Northumberland's past. It shows the wide range of sites that have been investigated and the large number of people and organisations that have been involved over the years.

We hope you enjoy this issue and would like to thank all the Friends of Archaeology in Northumberland whose continued support makes it possible to publish this magazine.

**Sara Rushton**

**Liz Williams**

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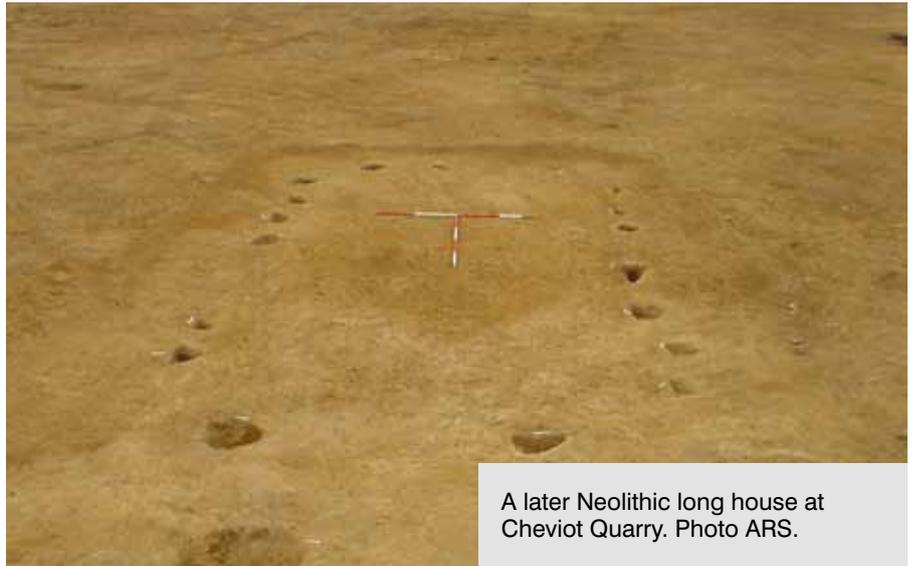
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# Celebrating 25 years of development

As regular readers will know, *Archaeology in Northumberland* has been reporting news of archaeological discoveries in the county for 25 years – coincidentally the same period that developer-funded archaeology has been around. In 1990 the way in which archaeological sites were recorded ahead of their destruction by development was fundamentally changed. The issue of new government guidance on Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16) set out a clear presumption in favour of the physical preservation of archaeological remains and where this was not possible developers were required to carry out investigations at their own expense. The policy is now built into the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The following synopsis celebrates 25 years since archaeology was made part of the system for granting planning permission.



A later Neolithic long house at Cheviot Quarry. Photo ARS.

These discoveries have shed new light on the county's ancient and recent past and have also contributed to changing views of the North East region and our ideas about England's past. All the work described below has been required by Northumberland County Council and its predecessor local planning authorities, on the advice of Northumberland Conservation.



Cache of flint blades from Akeldsteads. Photo ARS.

## Prehistory

When the last Ice Age ended 12,000 years ago, forests and grassland established as the climate warmed, providing a rich environment for animals and people to colonise. A rare discovery of two Mesolithic aurochs skulls (a species of wild cattle) and red deer antler was made at Haughton Strother Quarry on the River North Tyne. The skull dated between 5670 and 5520 BC and was recovered by Thompsons of Prudhoe from a palaeochannel on an ancient river terrace, previously identified by Newcastle University. The skulls and antlers are of great significance in regional terms since animal remains from the late Mesolithic period, particularly from inland areas, are scarce and generally very poorly preserved. Equally rare is evidence of human settlement – a possible



An aurochs skull and red deer antlers from Haughton Strother Quarry. Photo PCA.

# ent-led archaeology 1990-2015



Iron Age settlement excavations at Blagdon (Delhi).  
Photo TWM Archaeology

post-built structure found at Lanton Quarry in excavations for Tarmac Northern may be evidence of a small hut similar to that recorded in research excavations on the coast at Howick.

The transition from the hunter-gatherer to farming way of life took place slowly from around 4000 BC. Evidence of this more settled way of life has been revealed in sand and gravel quarries in the Milfield Basin in north Northumberland where archaeologists have been working with Tarmac Northern since 2005 at two quarries (Cheviot and Lanton). A unique sequence of buildings was found at Cheviot Quarry where two early Neolithic round houses and three later Neolithic long houses together with hearths, pits and other structures and a great quantity of pottery, stone tools and objects may represent the earliest small farming settlement in Northumberland. What is more remarkable is the quantity and nature of pottery from the site, including 15 sherds

of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age beakers from non-grave contexts, including All Over Corded Ware. Before these excavations there had been little information about the character of early Neolithic pottery in the county. Further probable Neolithic buildings with associated hearths, pits and postholes containing Neolithic pottery were revealed at Lanton Quarry. At Milfield village the remains of a short-lived Neolithic-Early Bronze Age dwelling was found that was in use at the same time as nearby henges and is the first evidence in this area for where the henge builders lived. One of the best caches of Neolithic flint blades in the county was discovered prior to gravel extraction at Akeld Steads by Tarmac. Away from the Milfield Basin, archaeologists working on Holy Island for Nichol, Armstrong & Lowe uncovered a possible Neolithic pit and postholes arrangement which is the earliest known structure on the island.

The transition to the Bronze Age occurred around 2500 BC and pollen analysis shows woods were disappearing and grassland and moorland was on the increase as farming developed and spread. The sand and gravel workings at Lanton and Cheviot Quarries have revealed evidence of Bronze Age settlement and at Cheviot Quarry archaeologists also found evidence of massive enclosures, small horseshoe-shaped enclosures and pits, all close to the ritual monuments of the Milfield Basin.

Iron began to replace bronze in tool making around 1000 BC although it did not become common until around 500 BC. The Bronze Age way of life is thought to have continued relatively unchanged into the Iron Age – farming cattle and sheep, raising crops and using the natural resources of the coast. However, settlements began to change from being open groups of hut circles to ones surrounded by banks, ditches or wooden palisades.

# Celebrating 25 years of development-led archaeology



Pit alignments. Photo TWM Archaeology.

In south-east Northumberland and neighbouring Tyne and Wear, archaeologists working on surface mine and housing development sites have made significant discoveries that have changed the way we think about Iron Age settlement on the coastal plain. These discoveries have shown a previously unsuspected density of settlement activity and the rich and varied archaeological potential that survives. The results have been brought together in *The Iron Age on the Northumberland Coastal Plain*, published by TWM Archaeology

and the Arbeia Society in 2012. In south-east Northumberland, for example, large Iron Age enclosed settlements and a number of smaller unenclosed settlements have been excavated at Pegswood Moor Farm, Blagdon and Shotton on behalf of Banks Mining. The Pegswood Moor Farm example was an Iron Age and Romano-British settlement and field system of a type previously unknown in this part of Northumberland; and at Blagdon Park the complete plan of an Iron Age settlement

was revealed, closely followed by the discovery of a small Iron Age settlement at Shotton. The variety and complexity of these new Iron Age settlements means that the typical rectilinear form identified by George Jobey and Norman McCord in the 1960s and 1970s is now recognised as only one component in the settlement pattern of the lowland plain.

Alongside the discovery of prehistoric settlements, some remarkable pit alignments spanning the late Bronze Age to early Iron



Lanton Iron Age cist and burial.  
Photo ARS.

Age periods were found at Blagdon Park and Shotton. Here, long lines of pits snaked their way across the landscape demonstrating a regular system of land division, perhaps demarcating resources such as pasture and woodland and access to the river Blyth for particular communities or settlements.

One of the greatest gaps in our knowledge of Iron Age people is where and how they dealt with their dead. Excavations at Lanton Quarry revealed the first formal Iron Age burial from the county, where remains of an elderly woman were found in a stone cist set within a pit.

The natural resources of the coast were an important part of prehistoric life. Excavations on the cliff tops at Needles Eye, Berwick, in advance of an extension to the North Road Industrial Estate, found a substantial Iron Age camp. It may have been used only seasonally or annually,

because although there was no evidence of settlement here the pottery assemblage does suggest some habitation. The camp site continued in use into the first century AD although the ditches of the enclosure had been abandoned by then. In the abandoned ditches of the camp a substantial and important assemblage of Iron Age ceramics was found, including briquetage (associated with salt production and trade). The finds include one of the largest assemblages of Iron Age pottery recovered from a site in Northumberland and the largest assemblage of briquetage then discovered in Britain and the only evidence for prehistoric salt processing north of the Fens.

## Roman

The advent of Roman Britain followed the invasion of the south coast of England in AD43. In the early AD70s, the Roman governor of Britain took over the whole of the North of England and by AD81 Agricola had advanced the Roman front line into Scotland. Gravel extraction at Wooperton Quarry by RMC Aggregates (Northern) gave the opportunity for archaeologists to investigate the Devil's Causeway Roman road which travels through the county from north of Corbridge towards Berwick. Unexpectedly, as well as sections of the road, excavations revealed pit alignments, rectilinear ditches/gullies, pits and postholes together with Roman pottery which seem likely to represent the first recorded Roman military site north of Low Learchild fort.

Well-preserved Roman roads have also been uncovered elsewhere in the county. In excavations at Riding Mill for Meadowcroft Estates, Dere Street was found to be in a far better state of preservation than had been anticipated. At Walwick Hall, excavations on behalf of Mr G Wylie revealed the remains of the Military Way lying slightly north of the projected line on Ordnance Survey maps and comprising smooth but irregular-shaped and sized stone slabs, blocks and cobbles. Its appearance was considerably different to that of the same road seen further east on the western fringes of Newcastle upon Tyne.

New and innovative techniques were used by the Ministry of Defence to investigate Hadrian's Wall near Albemarle Barracks. Remains of the Wall lie beneath the B6318 through much of the county so when the barracks became a driver-training facility for heavy lorries and tracked vehicles research was commissioned to see what impact this might have on the buried remains. Using a combination of desk top assessment, trial trenching, an engineering test called Falling Weight Deflectometer and vibration testing, the results were reassuring that modern military use of the old Military Road was not damaging Hadrian's Wall.

Work to replace a water main near Throckley uncovered new information about some cunning defences along Hadrian's Wall. A series of pits found between the Wall and its north ditch are evidence of entanglements designed to impede and hold-up attackers and similar

# Celebrating 25 years of development-led archaeology



Throckley entanglements

to other examples found further east at Byker in Newcastle.

Work to replace a water main near Throckley uncovered new information about some cunning defences along Hadrian's Wall. A series of pits found between the Wall and its north ditch are evidence of entanglements designed to impede and hold-up attackers and similar to other examples found further east at Byker in Newcastle.

## Early Medieval

In the early medieval period Northumbria was at the forefront of political, cultural and intellectual developments. At its greatest extent in the seventh century the kingdom of Bernicia, with its capital at Bamburgh, extended from the Forth to the Humber. Yet, despite the importance of the early medieval period in the region, little is known about its settlement archaeology. Archaeologists excavating near

Cramlington at Shotton Surface Mining Site, for Banks Mining, made an exciting new discovery when they revealed an unexpected secular Anglo-Saxon settlement with a cluster of post-built halls, sunken floored buildings and ditched enclosures. The settlement showed a clear sequence of development, from an unenclosed settlement in the early Anglo-Saxon period to one of formalised farmsteads in separate enclosures by the late seventh century AD. This site is a very rare example of an isolated secular settlement in the area stretching between north Northumberland and North Yorkshire, and demonstrates how developer-funded archaeology is contributing to a new knowledge and understanding of our region.

Anglo-Saxon settlement remains have also come to light in and around Milfield. At Woodbridge Farm archaeologists working for Tarmac Roadstone found remains of timber buildings suggestive of a small settlement; and at Whitton Park for Robson Design they found postholes of a substantial timber building that shows that the Maelmin palace complex may be more extensive than had previously been recognised.

Indications of possible industrial activity and large-scale food processing in the 10th and 11th centuries were discovered by archaeologists working in Heddon-on-the-Wall on behalf of TTH Architects/NE Plant Sales. Scientific analysis of environmental samples taken from fills in the (Roman) vallum ditch revealed a variety of seeds and plant remains some of which showed evidence of



A Saxon house at Shotton.  
Photo TWM Archaeology.

crop processing – charred chaff and grains of oats, wheat and barley, that suggest this took place on a large scale. It is suspected that there was a large kiln or furnace in Heddon in the 11th century; a date of AD 1030-1220 was recovered from a single oat grain.

### Medieval

Developer-funded archaeology has revealed much about the medieval period across Northumberland, especially its towns and villages where details of buildings, land division (burgage plots), rubbish disposal and some industrial practices have come to light.

A previously unknown phase of occupation was found at Ancroft

when archaeologists excavated a series of medieval buildings for Edwin Thompson & Co. They uncovered buildings with dwarf stone walls and clay capping, which would have supported a timber-frame, as well as evidence of a narrow alley, or street, running between them. In other

parts of the county, development of vacant plots within and on the edge of villages has revealed medieval remains, for example at Cornhill-on-Tweed, Embleton and Alnmouth.

Some villages are only known from documents, so when a new business park was proposed at



Dovecote remains at West Hartford. Photo NAA.

# Celebrating 25 years of development-led archaeology

West Hartford, near Cramlington the opportunity arose to search for the lost village of Hartford. A series of investigations revealed substantial and extensive remains of a medieval rural settlement that included dwellings, workshops, enclosures and a dovecote, and hinted at the presence of a high status building nearby. Another excavation at nearby Shotton Surface Mine Site uncovered extensive remains of Shotton medieval village containing evidence of domestic and industrial activity, including a pottery kiln and a grain drying kiln or malting oven. Evidence for medieval industries is limited in the region but some small scale activities have been found. At North Stobswold extraction site, work for UK Coal revealed a series of fire pits across the site that were used for charcoal burning. Excavation on the Bishops Garage site in Corbridge found a corn drying kiln that may be part of a wider and as yet unknown complex, and in Rothbury All



Kiln at Bshops Garage.  
Photo NPA.

Saints churchyard archaeologists found a lime kiln.

Development-led archaeology has also provided the opportunity for large-scale open area excavation in some of our towns. Excavations in Berwick for Terrace Hill Projects examined an area of street frontage on Marygate and discovered timber buildings, property boundaries and over 40 pits. Finds included pottery and organic material such as wood, leather, rich assemblages of fish and bird bones and plant matter. The earliest buildings, dating to the late 12th century, were situated

on the Marygate frontage but had been abandoned by the 14th century, possibly as a result of the hostilities between England and Scotland. Later medieval buildings were constructed in the backplot. Well preserved organic remains have been found in other parts of Berwick and are a feature of the town's archaeology. Excavations of pits at Woolmarket for Yeoman Design, found one with a wicker lining. Clues to the uses of some parts of Berwick have been found in Ravensdowne where excavation and documentary evidence suggest the west side was the town's rubbish dump (Rotten Row).

Excavations in Walkergate for the Berwick Workspace development uncovered what may be one of the town's lost monastic sites, or perhaps a hospital or part of a church or even a rich secular building. The building had been demolished in the late 12th or 13th century and the finds included fragments of stained window glass and coins. Another lost site is the Carmelite Friary which may have been found at Governor's Gardens during excavations for Lindisfarne Homes.

The foundation of religious houses in the county from the mid-12th



Lime Kiln at All Saints, Rothbury. Photo IFA.



Medieval building at Cornhill. Photo Headland Archaeology.

century included the Dominican Friary at Bamburgh where work has allowed a more detailed ground plan to be reconstructed. At Brinkburn, excavations of the Augustinian Priory for Landmark Trust found substantial remains of the principal gatehouse that suggest the layout was very different from a conventional one.

Sometimes completely unexpected discoveries are made such as when building work started on a vacant plot on Castle Terrace, Berwick and a skeleton was found. Archaeologists went on to excavate a lost 12th century church and well-preserved burial ground which lay outside the walls of Berwick, in the former village of Bondington. The church may have been founded as a hospital and was probably abandoned when villagers retreated inside the town walls during the Anglo-Scottish wars of the 14th century.

Other churches and chapels, together with their burial grounds, have also disappeared and without developer-led archaeology would only be known from documentary evidence. For example, excavation of Chevington chapel, at British Coal Opencast's site found an unusual and interesting example of window tracery, built on the site of an earlier Iron Age settlement. Excavations at Trinity Terrace in Corbridge have regularly exposed medieval burials from the graveyard of Holy Trinity Church.

### Post-medieval

Relations between England and Scotland gradually improved in the latter part of the 16th century culminating with the Union of the Crowns in 1603. New fortifications had been built around Berwick but throughout this period another form of attack was fought between

local clans, or mosstroopers, along the Border giving rise to defensible buildings called bastles. From the late 16th century changes started to take place in the organisation of farming as fields were enclosed and arable land was converted to pasture. New farming practices were adopted in the 18th century

Wicker-lined pit in Berwick.  
Photo The Archaeological Practice.



# Celebrating 25 years of development-led archaeology

to increase productivity, especially in Glendale and lowland areas of the county, where model farms were built. The uplands were transformed by enclosure and dominated by sheep farming which largely replaced the practice of transhumance.

The post-medieval period was a time of industrial development and growth and in the North East this is especially linked with coal mining. At Barmoor work on EDF's new wind farm found the remains of bell pits and mine shafts up to 22m deep. Historic pillar and stall mine workings were found during work at Shotton and Blagdon (Delhi) opencast coal sites, operated by Banks Mining.

Many of the bastles in Northumberland are still in domestic or agricultural use and have been subject to various planning applications over the years, usually relating to modern living. Archaeological work on these buildings has included both historic building recording and

monitoring work. Many of these investigations have shown the surprisingly limited groundworks involved in the construction of these substantial structures with their metre thick walls. The removal of later cement and mortar at the Golf House Bastle at Chesterwood uncovered two previously blocked original doors.

Archaeological investigations across the county show that limited foundations appear to be a feature of many post-medieval buildings in Northumberland, with earlier, medieval remains still surviving beneath these later buildings.

Towns and villages remained largely pre-industrial in character. While many historic towns in Northumberland continued the medieval street pattern, investigations along Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed and Castle Street, Warkworth have revealed medieval settlement remains, showing that the streets were widened in the post-medieval period.



Brick sprung roof of septic tank in Berwick. Photo AOC Archaeology.

Archaeological discoveries continue to challenge historic documents in the post-medieval period with, for example, the apparent evidence of a primitive septic tank of late 18th-early 19th century date at 119-125 Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed. Documentary evidence states that septic tanks were first patented in France in 1881 and introduced to England after 1895.

There is a wealth of nonconformist chapels across Northumberland.



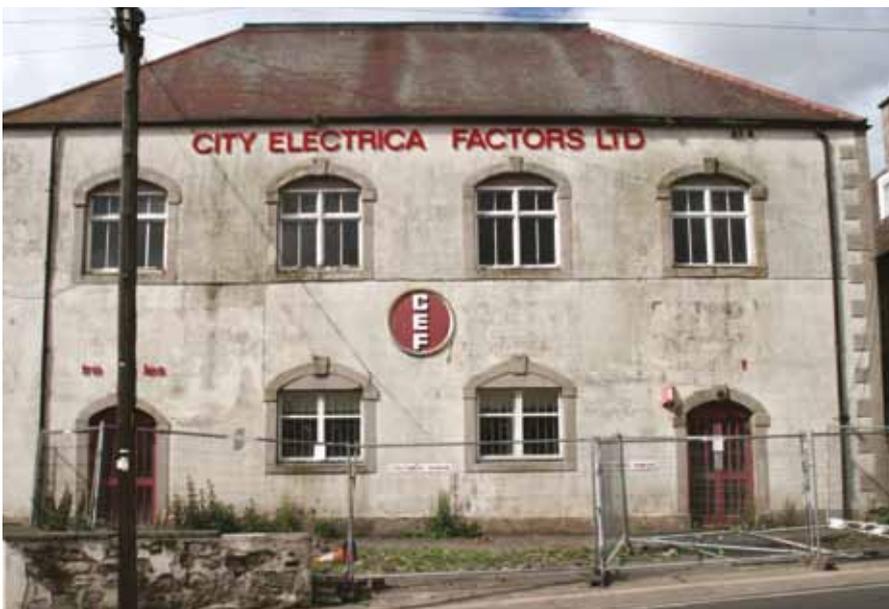
Pillar and stall mining remains at Blagdon (Delhi). Photo TWM Archaeology.



Churchill graffiti at Stannington.  
Photo The Archaeological Practice.



Wylam wagonway sleeper and chair.  
Photo TWM Archaeology.



Chapel Street Meeting House, Berwick.  
Photo The Archaeological Practice.

An assessment of the former Middle Meeting House on Chapel Street in Berwick-upon-Tweed concluded that it is the last surviving example of an 18th century meeting house in Berwick and may be the oldest of only a handful which survive largely intact in the county. Recording of a small gospel hall at Glanton built in 1904 showed it was formerly home to the Glanton Brethren – a nonconformist congregation whose acceptance of members from the Alnwick congregation resulted in a controversy that split the movement worldwide.

The 19th century was a period of innovation, much of it originating in Northumberland and the North East. Waggonways were the precursors of the railways, which was shown clearly at Wylam, where archaeological investigation work on the old railway line revealed two parallel rows of stone sleeper blocks from the earlier wagonway which would have carried the iron plate-way which

replaced the original timber rails. The defence of Britain in World War II is visible in the anti-tank traps and pillboxes which are still visible within the landscape. The more human element of wartime has, on occasion, been found during building recording. At St Mary's Hospital Stannington, a graffiti caricature of Winston Churchill from 1943 was recorded, while at Cragend Farm near Rothbury, WWII graffiti included instructions on farming practices in various languages, presumably for the instruction of Prisoners of War, as well as other graffiti left by the British forces guarding them.

Post-war buildings under threat have also been recorded by archaeologists and one the biggest was the former Blyth Power Station, demolished in 2003. Built by the newly nationalised electricity industry between 1955 and 1966, it was one of a group of power stations that advanced the industry's technological development. Research uncovered a vast archive of material and showed that it was an early example of the very large post-war stations built in rural settings.

The work described above was carried out by independent archaeological companies and include: Alan Williams Archaeology, AOC Archaeology, Archaeological Research Services, Archaeological Services Durham University, Bamburgh Research Project, CFA Archaeology, Headland Archaeology, Ian Farmer Associates, Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, North Pennines Archaeology, Northern Archaeological Associates, Peter Ryder, Pre-Construct Archaeology, The Archaeological Practice, Michael Truman, TWM Archaeology, Tyne and Wear Museums Service.

EW and KD

# New prehistoric rock art discovery

In the winter of 2014 an archaeological evaluation took place on land at Birney Hill, Ponteland. It was required by the Planning Service on the advice of the Conservation Team in order to help inform a planning inquiry for a proposed mixed-use development at the site.

The proposed development site comprised 20 fields to the north of Birney Hill Farm, situated to the south of the outskirts of Ponteland (NGR NZ 1497 6992). The work involved the excavation of 89 trenches in total, targeting the areas of greatest impact under the scheme.

The majority of the proposed development area has been agricultural in character throughout the post-medieval and modern periods, with some surviving earthworks relating to medieval ridge and furrow cultivation. Birney Hall, which is located at the centre of the site, is a Grade II Listed Building constructed in the 17th or early 18th century, but is in residential use and was not part of the proposed development (HER 14893).

Prior to the fieldwork a desk-based assessment of the site had identified that there was evidence

for prehistoric activity in the area, including a Bronze Age burial cairn to the west of the site at Heddon Laws Farm, located on top of a natural hill (HER 10867). Cropmarks had also been recorded in the wider area, which are indicative of prehistoric or Roman period settlement.

Archaeological features were encountered in several trenches, possibly ranging in date from Bronze Age through to the medieval period. Significantly, a number of ring ditches were revealed by the work which are indicative of prehistoric and/or Roman period activity. These were focused in two areas of the site, with a particular concentration of features west of Birney Hall. The only dating evidence recovered was a small assemblage of first to second century Roman pottery and an Anglo-Saxon copper alloy strap end, although the latter could be a casual loss.

The assessment of the soil samples from this site demonstrated that many of the archaeological features produced charred plant remains which are of archaeobotanical interest. These remains are also suitable for radiocarbon dating in many cases, a factor which might be important for future



work considering there was relatively little artefactual evidence recovered from the site.

Unexpectedly a large decorated sandstone boulder was also recovered from a trench north of Birney Hill Farm, which was a rare and important find. One face of the boulder was covered in cup and ring decoration, which is likely to be of Late Neolithic date. The boulder measured 1.5m x 1m x 0.9m, with the upper surface decorated with over 30 cup-marks, six of which had ring-marks. The



Boulder decorated with prehistoric cup and ring markings, from Birney Hill.

# at Birney Hill, Ponteland



Trial trenching at Birney Hill.

boulder had sustained some plough damage, with linear scars running across the carved panel.

When discovered, the cup and ring marked panel was facing north-west in the direction of the Simonside Hills. However, the boulder was not believed to be in its original location, but rather was buried within a natural hollow in the clay subsoil, possibly as a result of field clearance. No other archaeological finds or features were associated with the boulder and it appears to be unrelated to the ring ditches,

which were located some distance to the north and south.

Decorated boulders were often incorporated into Bronze Age monuments, and it has been speculated that this example could have been part of a now-destroyed Bronze Age burial monument. However, the boulder could also have been a free-standing feature. Similar free-standing examples are known from elsewhere in Northumberland and Cumbria, including the Tortie Stone at Hallbankgate, near Brampton.

We may never know the original location of the decorated boulder, unless further archaeological work is undertaken in the surrounding landscape. The find is now on display in the Great North Museum.

This work was funded by Lugano Group and undertaken by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology.

**Martin Railton**

**Wardell Armstrong Archaeology**

# Grazing on Ha'Hill, Morpeth

Ha' Hill in Morpeth is an 11th century motte and bailey castle. Located in the midst of Carlisle Park, it is owned and managed by Northumberland County Council and Active Northumberland.

The hill has overseen the development of Morpeth as a thriving and popular market town, the uprooting of market gardens to create the park in time for its opening in 1929, the installation of the William Turner Garden in 2001, and was probably even traversed by Turner himself in the early 1500s.

But in our current health and safety conscious times it was proving a bit of a handful to maintain as the 'grassy mound' expected of mottes and baileys. The annual strimming of the motte became a much dreaded maintenance task, with rabbit burrows, badger setts and uneven ground, created by grazers of times gone by, invisible under the dense carpet of rosebay willowherb, brambles and blackthorn scrub. Contractors brought in to do the job soon put up their prices, park gardeners' morale slumped and park managers furrowed their brows each summer when the hill needed maintenance.

Then, in 2012, during a meeting of green space managers from around the North East there was a moment of epiphany, like the sun rising over the hill. The idea to use sheep to graze the hill was suggested and like all things that are meant to be, everything fell neatly into place to make it happen.

The sheep are Shetlands and are provided by Flexigraze, an innovative social enterprise,



specialising in grazing nature reserves and important grasslands throughout North East England. Flexigraze is not-for-profit, reinvesting any profits back into local conservation grazing. If you're interested in finding out more their website is <http://flexigraze.org.uk>.

Having the sheep provided by Flexigraze is what makes grazing possible at Carlisle Park. All requirements for shearing, dipping, licencing and movement are covered by Flexigraze for a very reasonable fee and annual membership of the scheme. Daily care of the sheep consists of feeding

and counting, which is done by the Carlisle Park gardeners, any problems are reported to Flexigraze and are addressed promptly.

The funding to provide the stock fencing for the sheep was provided by Sita Trust through the Growing Wild project that saw the establishment of wild flower meadows across south east Northumberland on land that was, mostly, previously managed as amenity grassland. Being part of the Growing Wild project means we have monitored the flora on the hill, which has changed from the dominant species listed earlier,



Sheep grazing on Ha'Hill, Morpeth.

to predominantly grass with a spectacular display of foxgloves in late spring. Creeping thistle and nettle have increased in places, but there is now not a rosebay willowherb or blackthorn sapling to be seen. I'll leave you to consider the pros and cons of changing the dominant plant species – foxgloves are excellent for bees and rosebay willowherb can support up to 19 species of moth and butterfly.

The sheep have had an inevitable effect on the ground of the hill, which is not desirable for Scheduled Ancient Monument management. A pre-existing gully,

probably created by badgers and present for decades was efficiently widened and deepened by the sheep as they created their own earth ledges to rest on. We have filled this abode with brash and branches from hawthorn to allow it to regenerate naturally and the sheep have created a new set of ledges further round the hill. I suspect this will be a bit of a process of eviction and re-establishment in future grazing seasons.

And possibly the most important thing of all, have the sheep been accepted by visitors to the park? After much scepticism and doubt

that they would be safe on the hill, the sheep have now worked for three successful summers and are much loved by park staff and visitors alike. They provide an interesting attraction for visitors, although we discourage feeding and encourage dogs on leads, and the hill provides enough space for the sheep to wander off if they feel like it.

If you would like to see the sheep on the hill, the sheep are here from around June to November annually.

**Emma Evans**

# Flodden Hill 2013-15

Despite the absence through illness of Flodden 500 project's archaeological director, Chris Burgess, the final season of excavation on Flodden Hill proceeded in 2015 as had been planned. This, and the 2012-14 seasons, are summarised here and previous reports can be found in *Archaeology in Northumberland* 20.

## The 'Scottish Camp'/inner rectilinear enclosure

On the southern rampart the 'parapet wall' was re-examined in 2015 and shown to be founded at a lower level than previously thought and formed a central division within the rampart. It cut through and revetted the up-cast subsoil forming the outer side of the bank while its inner face was butted by dark silty stony soils overlying a low inner revetment and containing two Iron Age pot sherds. A similar sequence was seen in a new trench to the east, though here the inner rampart revetment had been robbed – two Border Breweries Ltd bottles (1899-1924) may have been associated with this activity; other finds included Iron Age pottery

and two utilised stones.

Excavation of the east-facing entrance continued in 2012-13 and revealed a partly rock-cut 'hollow way' approaching the entrance to the enclosure that was defined by a dry-stone revetment standing two courses high in places. The southern revetment ran westward through the entrance and was founded on a ledge cut into the natural rock but evidence of a possible earlier timber phase was found with the discovery of a post-socket in the ledge east of the surviving revetment. The surface of the 'hollow way' was patched with small cobbling between upstands of bedrock which had a worn appearance, which suggests it had been in use longer than the Scottish army's occupation of the hill in 1513. No evidence of a ditch or ditch terminals was found.

The northern revetment was more complex. On the north side, the entrance was first narrowed and subsequently completely blocked with rubble and later, a low stony bank was constructed across the inner enclosure, running roughly eastwards through the middle

of the blocked entranceway; no dating evidence was found for these activities. The revetments both supported rampart terminals which survived as a mass of small rubble.

At the north-east angle, excavation in 2012 of a possible 1513 corner 'bastion' disproved this interpretation. A little further east a north-south aligned revetment of angular rubble was exposed, up to three courses high, retaining a bank of fractured andesite and clay. Between this and the enclosure rampart the natural ground profile dipped markedly, with dark silty stony soils filling the hollow of what may have been a ditch and a similar feature was noted to the south.

Excavation in 2013 close to the north-east corner of the enclosure identified a culvert-like feature running east-west and cutting the rampart. It comprised large, flattish, side stones and an in-situ capstone and further side stones were revealed in 2014. The side stones ran westward through the rampart for about 2.30m, seeming to blend into a stone revetment



Approach to eastern entrance in Trench 3 showing north and south revetments and track surfacing with volunteer digger!



The southern rampart in Trench 2: extreme left-inner revetment; centre – ‘parapet wall’; extreme right – outer revetment.

which was possibly equivalent to the ‘parapet’ wall. Two smaller culvert-like features appear to join, or branch from, the first but the date and function of these remains uncertain. They do not appear to have been flues as, though some slag-like material was recovered from one, there were no signs of direct heat in the vicinity and little charcoal and are too small to be souterrains. Possibly they are post-medieval artificial fox-earths, the estate having once been active hunting territory, and there are distinct similarities between the Flodden Hill features and published excavated examples.

### Work on the south-west side of the Hill

Two trenches were dug in 2014 to examine linear anomalies revealed by geophysics. Excavation revealed one anomaly corresponded closely to a ‘rumbler’ field drain but a second more substantial anomaly appeared to coincide with the ploughed out inner ditch of a double-ditched rectilinear enclosure, visible on aerial photographs and apparently seen by MacLauchlan in about 1852.

Though the form suggests an Iron Age/Romano-British date, it is conceivable that an earthwork which would have been upstanding in 1513 might yield evidence for re-use by the Scottish army. Excavation revealed a deep plough soil covering the southern edge of a cut running north-east by south-west filled with layers of stony silt and clay soils which suggest the fill of a substantial feature, perhaps a ditch. The only finds were fragments of Iron Age pottery and work was abandoned after torrential rain left this area too waterlogged for meaningful excavation.

In 2014 a section was also cut across a low, spread, embankment running west from the ‘Scottish Camp’, apparently the ‘line of entrenchment’ which MacLauchlan (1863) saw as connecting two 1513 redoubts. This was a turf-built dyke, ditched on both sides. On the south side, the subsoil was heavily charcoal-flecked but on the north and below the bank no charcoal was visible; there were no associated finds. Mindful of the firing of rubbish in the Scots’ camp on the morning of

the battle, samples of charcoal from the southern ground surface were taken for radiocarbon dating. The calibrated results (SUERC-66034 and 66035) however gave dates of 3794–3693BC and 1437–1296BC, spanning the Neolithic to early Bronze Age! This is further indication of the time-depth of the Flodden landscape.

**John Nolan**  
Northern Counties  
Archaeological Services



Border Brewery Codd bottle from Trench 16.

# Barmoor Wind Farm



Mine shaft exposed  
in plan.  
© CFA Archaeology Ltd.





Wind turbine foundation excavation showing the depth to the top of the coal seam.  
© CFA Archaeology Ltd.

Barmoor Wind Farm lies to the west of Lowick and consists of six turbines and associated infrastructure. It was the subject of an archaeological watching brief during construction which began in 2014.

The Ordnance Survey First Edition map of 1860 depicts 'old workings' and an 'old coal pit' close to the development area to the south-west of Southmoor Steading, as well as a series of tracks criss-crossing the area; the old workings and pits are also visible on satellite imagery and on the ground. The geological record shows that sporadic coal-bearing strata are present within the development area. Drift mining is also known to have occurred near the development site, with traces of workings visible adjacent to some of the wind farm access tracks.

Previous work by CFA Archaeology in 2006 identified and recorded mining remains and further remains were found in the 2014 watching brief.

The watching brief identified extensive mining remains in the form of bell pits, mine shafts and related features, with particular concentrations seen in two locations. The bell pits are likely to be the earliest mining features and some may have been exploratory in nature. The shafts represent a second phase of deeper coal extraction and survive as oval and sub-oval features rich in shale and coal fragments. They probably contained timber linings to maintain their sections to allow a greater working depth. Coal was

normally winched out by hand using a windlass. Unfortunately, the trackways serving the old workings, and illustrated on the historic maps, have left no archaeological trace.

The coal seam in this area lies close to the surface and the excavation work provided information on its depth with one shaft measuring 22 metres deep.

The area also contains evidence of prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the wind farm, in the form of surface finds of flint (HER 1973 & 3692) and a bronze axe (HER 1951). The discovery of a small pit containing prehistoric pottery during the 2006 evaluation raised the possibility that further prehistoric archaeological features and finds might be made, although unfortunately nothing definitive was recorded in the watching brief.

The results of the evaluation and watching brief, along with the general archaeological background of the area, demonstrate that Bar Moor, South Moor and the surrounding area are particularly rich in post-medieval mining remains of a type known as bell pits. They were part of a wider post-medieval industrial landscape across South Moor for the extraction of coal and clay.

This work was funded by EDF Energy Renewables and undertaken by CFA Archaeology. It was required by the Planning Service on the advice of the Conservation Team.

**Melanie Johnson**  
CFA Archaeology Ltd

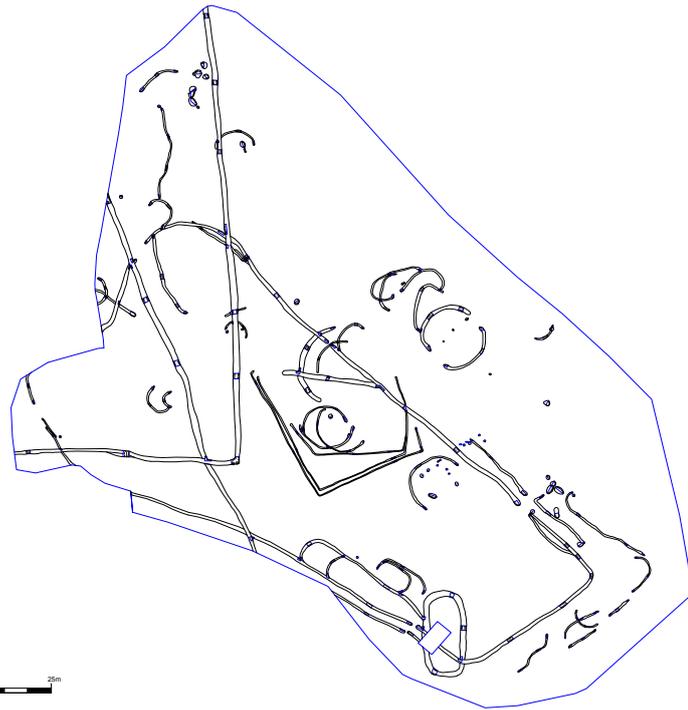


Surface remains of a bell pit or mine shaft in proximity to the wind farm.  
© CFA Archaeology Ltd.

# Iron Age Settlement at St George's

A detailed assessment of land proposed for development at St George's Hospital, Morpeth, was commissioned during the winter of 2013 and 2014. The archaeological work initially consisted of a geophysical survey which was conducted in the fields south of the former Victorian psychiatric hospital. The survey revealed a sub-rectangular linear anomaly, interpreted as a ditched enclosure in the south-western area of the site. The probable ditched enclosure measured 115m x 40m and upon further inspection of the survey results, numerous sub-circular features were identified inside the enclosure's interior. The internal features were interpreted as roundhouse remains, internal livestock enclosures and associated storage, or waste, pits.

Consequently, a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching took place during winter 2014 in order to investigate and further characterise the anomalies identified during the geophysical survey. Thirty-four trenches were excavated, including eight trenches specifically targeted across the enclosure ditch and the sub-circular anomalies situated within the settlement interior. Four of these revealed archaeological features confirming the presence of the ditched enclosure. The enclosure is situated on a plateau on a prominent bluff overlooking the river Wansbeck that slopes off steeply on its southern and western sides. It was noted that the westernmost enclosure ditches, overlooking the sharp slopes, were narrower by an average 0.4m than the eastern 'landward' ditches. The relative width of the ditches suggested that the prehistoric enclosure would have been approached from the north and east sides and that access from the south and west would be less desirable due to the steep incline. The greater width displayed by the



Plan of excavated features at St George's Hospital, Morpeth.  
Drawn by ARS.



A fragment of Grooved Ware pottery recovered from a possible Late Neolithic drainage gully. Photo: ARS.

eastern ditches was interpreted as a deliberate attempt to form a more substantial and impressive barrier to this approach.

The location of roundhouse drip gullies and probable livestock enclosure ditches were confirmed within the enclosure interior and matched the position of anomalies identified during the geophysical survey. Furthermore, reference to

the survey results also indicated that additional sub-circular features, possibly highlighting the location of pits or domestic structures, remain buried within both the interior and exterior of the enclosure.

The form of the St George's enclosure and the associated internal features are considered characteristic of indigenous rural settlements situated on the

# Hospital, Morpeth



The south-western extent of the later prehistoric rectangular enclosure clearly displaying parallel ditches potentially divided by an earthen bank. Photo: ARS.



An Early Neolithic oval shaped enclosure situated at the extreme south-west of the site on a promontory overlooking the River Wansbeck and Morpeth town centre. Photo: ARS.

south-eastern Northumberland coastal plain during the late Iron Age and early Roman period. The traditional view, proposed by George Jobey during the 1960s and 1970s, was that the rectilinear enclosures were Iron Age rural settlements which later thrived in the hinterlands north of Hadrian's Wall during the second century AD. However, recent developer-funded archaeological excavation of rectilinear enclosures at Blagdon Park, East Brunton, West Brunton and the nearby

site at Pegswood Moor have since provided radiocarbon dates which have changed this understanding. The radiocarbon dates indicate that they represent the final stage in the development of prehistoric settlements, some of which initially developed during the Bronze Age, when they were abruptly abandoned at a date broadly contemporaneous with the construction of Hadrian's Wall (see Nick Hodgson et al *The Iron Age on the Northumberland Coastal Plain: Excavations in advance of development 2002-*

2010, for more information). It is unclear if the Roman military deliberately removed the local population from the hinterlands immediately north of the wall, or if traditional tribal farming and trading had become so heavily disrupted by Roman influence that continued settlement was rendered unsustainable. Nevertheless these findings are a significant step forward in our understanding of the impact of Hadrian's Wall on the surrounding population and opens avenues for future research into the relationships governing interactions between the occupying Roman forces and the indigenous population.

An archaeological excavation was conducted at St George's Hospital in autumn 2015 and analysis of the results is underway; it is hoped that further information can be attained from the site which will contribute towards understanding prehistoric settlement within the Northumbrian coastal plain, and particularly of the pre-enclosure phases of settlement.

This work was funded by Linden Homes Ltd and undertaken by Archaeological Research Services. It was required by the Planning Service on the advice of the Conservation Team.

**Rupert Lotherington**  
Archaeological Research Services Ltd

## Acknowledgements

Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank Linden Homes Ltd for the kind support they have provided throughout the course of the St George's Hospital project.

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# A NU Young Archaeologists Club for the uplands....

In April 2014 the Northumberland Uplands and North Pennines branch of the National Young Archaeologists Club (YAC) was launched at Walltown Quarry in the Northumberland National Park. The branch was established following discussions between Paul Frodsham (then of North Pennines AONB Partnership) and Chris Jones of the National Park. Established under the auspices of the AONB's Altogether Archaeology project, the process of setting up the branch from scratch took several months of form filling and child protection training for Branch Leaders and Assistants by National Park Community Archaeologists Gemma Stewart and Krissy Moore.

The YAC branch meets on the third Saturday of the month for a minimum of six sessions per year, with sessions taking place at a variety of locations across the North Pennines and Northumberland National Park. In 2014 sessions included flint knapping at Simonside and ancient pottery in Rothbury, lead mining at Killhope and World War One at Alston. Members were also given the opportunity to join in the Altogether Archaeology excavations at St Botolph's Chapel, Frosterley. The 2015 programme has included Dark Skies at Once Brewed, Medieval Crime and Punishment at Hexham Gaol and joining the Flodden branch of the YAC for their annual "Big Dig".

The YAC draws members from across the North Pennines and Northumberland National Park including Alston, Greenhead, Harbottle and Otterburn as well as from south-east Northumberland.

The need for the YAC was specifically identified to provide opportunities for children and families in rural areas. Other YACs exist in Newcastle, Kendal and in north Northumberland, many of



YAC members at work. © Chris Jones NNPA.

which are oversubscribed, with a waiting list for new members. The long term benefits of the YAC are yet to reveal themselves at this early stage, but clearly there are significant opportunities for children to engage with archaeology across the core geographic area which would not have happened otherwise.

Feedback from individual sessions has been extremely positive (both from parents and children). The new YAC has worked with local archaeologists, other YACs and local tourist attractions and providers, thus making a difference to a number of people. Through careful session planning and rigorous adherence to child protection policy and best practice, each child has an enjoyable,

informative learning and fun experience. It is very early days but it is hoped that these experiences will enable YAC children to thrive.

Sessions will be on the third Saturday of the month through 2016. Attendance at each session is limited, but expressions of interest from parents are welcome. Contact Chris Jones ([chris.jones@nnpa.org.uk](mailto:chris.jones@nnpa.org.uk)), for further details. Or visit the YAC website <http://www.yac-uk.org/>.

**Chris Jones**  
Northumberland National Park



Volunteers working at Low Hauxley.

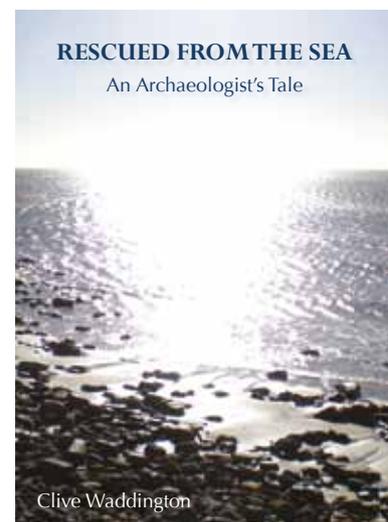
# Rescued from the Sea – new book reveals the full story

A popular book providing a summary account of the rescue excavations at Low Hauxley from an archaeologist's first-hand perspective has been published. *Rescued from the Sea. An Archaeologist's Tale* is 64 pages in length and has full colour throughout with 78 beautifully produced images. With sea level rise accelerating, archaeologists are in a race against time to record ancient remains eroding from our shores before they are destroyed by the sea. This accessible book documents a remarkable story of how a prehistoric site perched on a cliff edge was discovered and excavated by professional

archaeologists with the help of the local community. The results from this excavation have made an important contribution to our national story, as well as for Northumberland, and with an abundance of illustrations this book provides a highly visual record of this exciting work. This is a story of discovery, persistence and passion in which many hundreds of people took part. Relive this remarkable excavation through the pages of this book and let the story unfold just as it did for the excavators. It can be purchased direct from the Northumberland Wildlife Trust priced at £10 with all proceeds going towards further recording

and monitoring of eroding archaeological remains on the Northumberland coast.

[www.nwt.org.uk/shop/product/rescued-sea-archaeologists-tale](http://www.nwt.org.uk/shop/product/rescued-sea-archaeologists-tale)



# Investigations at the Premonstrater

Several phases of archaeological investigation were carried out in advance of, and during, groundworks associated with the redevelopment of The Lord Crewe Arms by the Lord Crewe Charity on the site of the medieval abbey of Blanchland in south Northumberland. It was required by the Planning Service on the advice of the Conservation Team and also required scheduled monument consent. The fieldwork comprised assessment, evaluation excavations in March and June 2013, as well as historic buildings recording and monitoring work.

Although some evidence points to the possibility of an earlier ecclesiastical foundation at Blanchland, the documented abbey was founded for an abbot and twelve canons by Walter de Bolbec in 1165. From the early 14th century, the wars with Scotland, followed by the Black Death, reduced the abbey to an impoverished state and in the period 1478-1500 surviving evidence from Visitations shows that the abbey remained poor; numbers fell to eight, of which three or four would have been living away to serve as vicars of the parishes to which the abbey owned the patronage – Bywell, St Andrew, Heddon-on-the-Wall and Kirkharle. The abbey buildings were in poor condition, especially the chapter house and in 1539 the Abbey was finally dissolved when there was an abbot, sub-prior, five canons and two novices.

In 1545 William Farewell purchased Blanchland and by the early 17th century the estate had passed by marriage into the Forster family. In 1704, following the death of the last heir of the Forsters, Nathaniel Lord Crewe, Bishop of Durham, purchased the family estates including Blanchland and Bamburgh. On the death of Lord Crewe in 1721, the Blanchland and Bamburgh Estates were left to the Trustees of the Lord Crewe Estate, with which Blanchland remains. In 1747 John Wesley commented that 'the little town...is

little more than a heap of ruins,' but in 1752, when Blanchland was made into a separate parish, the Trustees created the present church from the ruins of its monastic predecessor. The general remodelling of the village to its present form took place in the later 18th or early 19th century, to the extent that in 1828 Archdeacon Singleton found the village '...the very gem and emerald of the mining district.'

The principal buildings included in the investigations reported here are the Abbey Church and the West and South Ranges of the Monastic Buildings. The Premonstratensian church was of an unusual and asymmetric plan, a long and narrow nave and chancel with a north transept that had a two-bay aisle on its east side and, uniquely, a tower at its north end. The present church is a 1752 reconstruction incorporating parts of the medieval chancel and transept, as well as the virtually intact tower. The only other above-ground remnant of the church is the western part of the south wall of the nave, partly incorporated in the Abbot's Tower of the Lord Crewe Arms.

Premonstratensian houses as a rule show no distinctive variations on the standard medieval conventual plan, so there is every reason to believe that the monastic buildings at Blanchland followed the usual pattern of a chapter house and dorter (dormitory) in the east range, a frater (refectory) on the south, probably with a kitchen attached at its west end, and a guest house and possibly abbot's lodging on the west. Blanchland is virtually unique in that the buildings of the village perpetuate the ground plan of the medieval monastery. The present Lord Crewe Arms is an L-plan structure representing the western (Main Block) and southern (Cottages) cloister ranges; to the south and west of this the 'Square' (again L-plan) appears to be the Abbey's outer court, incorporating substantial medieval structural remains.



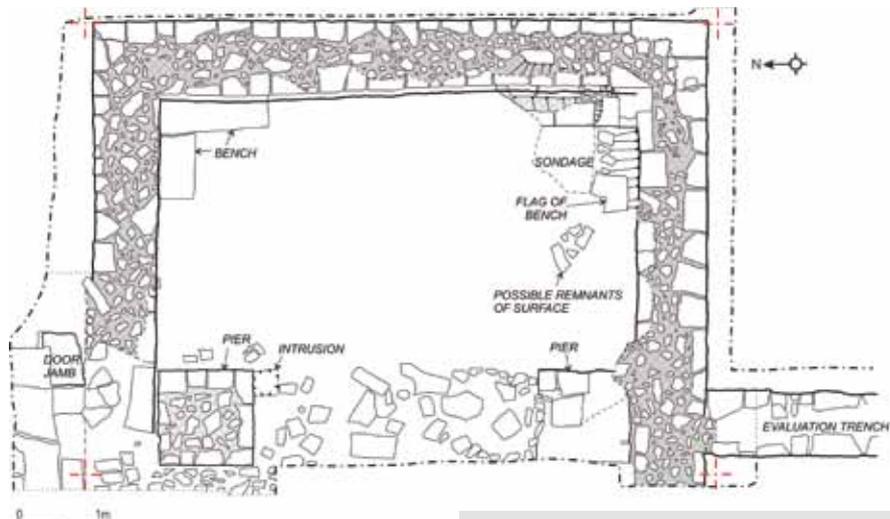
It is clear that the West Range was largely rebuilt in two phases during the 18th century. The reconstruction of the South Range may have come later still, and could have been part of the 1813-18 works when many of the houses in the village may have been remodelled, although the thicker walls are probably medieval. The East Range was probably removed in or before the remodelling of the 18th century.

A total of six evaluation trenches were excavated in March 2013 within the Scheduled part of the site, with an additional one adjacent to it, in order to investigate the route of a proposed service trench (marked in blue on the plan). Work revealed a considerable number and variety of service pathways through the development area, principally drains. Walls of probable medieval origin were uncovered alongside and running parallel with the present boundary wall along the south side of the cloister and at two points branching at right angles from it. The latter conform to the position of the west

# nsian Abbey of Blanchland



Chapter House from the east.



Chapter House plan.

(front) and east (rear) walls of the former East Range. The only other remains of significance uncovered were those of a flagged surface in the south-west corner of the cloister, adjacent to the present main rear entrance to the Lord Crewe Arms, but the presence of live drains there prevented full excavation.

Further work in June 2013 saw the extension of Trenches 3 and 4. The continuation northwards of the west wall of the East Range was observed in Trench 3. A possible cobbled surface was found on the west (external) side of the west wall at a depth of some 1.2 metres below a deposit of rubble, rich in mortar and render - the latter presumably eroded from the walls of the East Range - within which was a small number of medieval glass sherds. East of the wall (i.e. inside the East Range) bordering the north side of the service trench cut was a wall, interpreted as the north face of a cross-wall, extending eastwards across the building. In Trench 4, further excavation revealed the continuation of the east wall of the

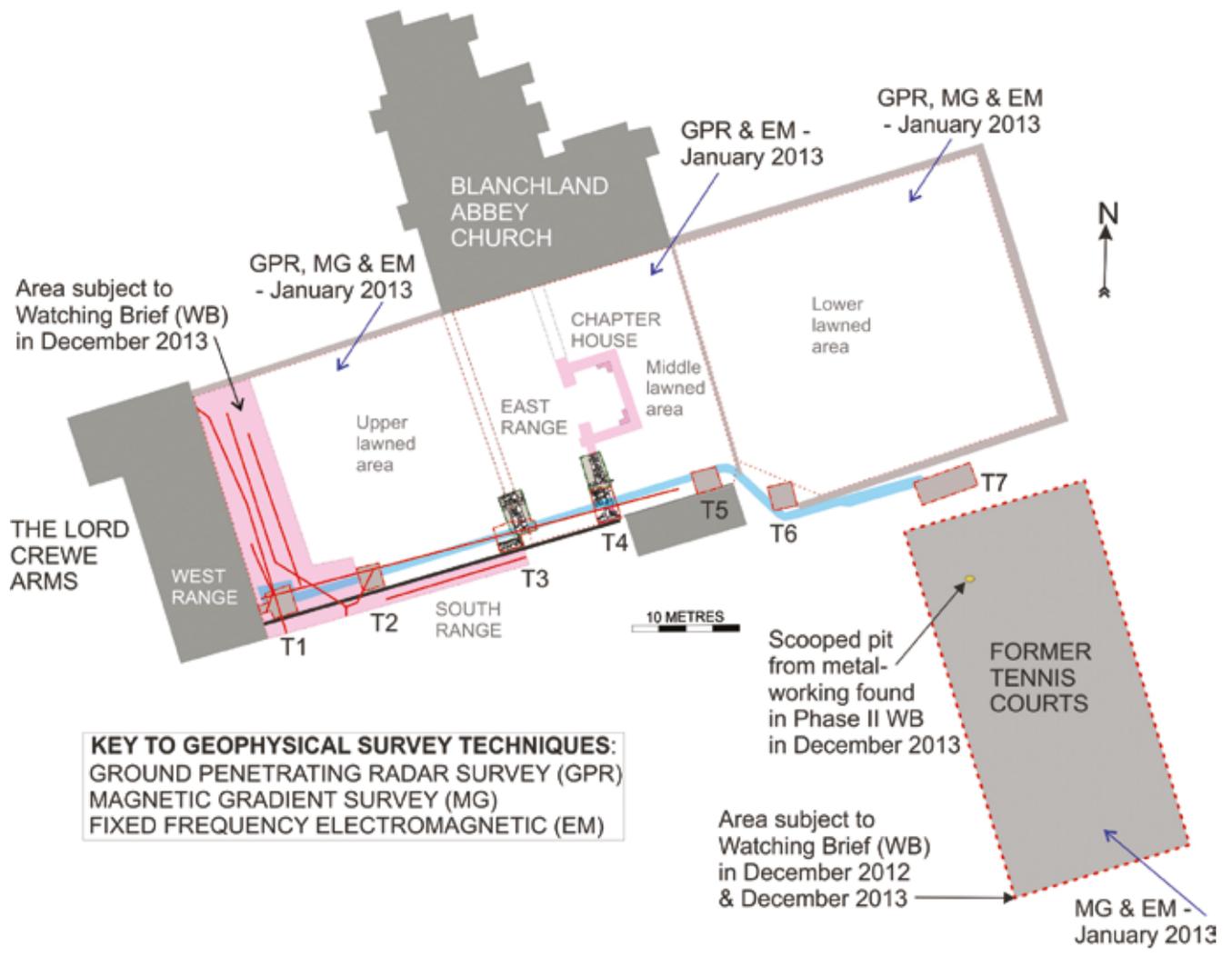
East Range, with, on its west side, a surface of fragmentary flagstones, interpreted as an under-floor for stone flags. Above this was a deposit of rubble, rich in mortar and render; the latter presumably eroded from the walls of the East Range, within which was a considerable deposit of broken medieval glass of likely 13th century origin. The virtual absence of lead from the deposit leads to the conclusion that it is a destruction deposit associated with the Dissolution.

In addition to the formal excavations, several phases of watching brief were carried out to the rear of the Lord Crewe Hotel. Groundworks on the former tennis courts and east (lower) lawned garden revealed a burnt, oval bowl-shaped depression containing an ingot of lead or pewter, probably the product of in situ melting of material robbed from the monastery after the Dissolution. Monitoring work during the excavation of service trenches on the lawned gardens produced no significant results, but the monitoring of landscaping work



Excavations of the east wall of the East Range

# Investigations at the Premonstratensian Abbey of Blanchland



on the middle lawned garden revealed walls of the Chapter House at a very shallow depth. The exposed remains comprised a rectangular structure, 7.59 m N-S by 5.49 m, with the west wall absent save for two pier bases, indicating an arched opening. In the north-east and south-east corners of the structure were revealed part of the stone benches which would originally have been set along the north, east and south walls.

The fieldwork carried out in 2012-14 is the first to have recorded the character and state of survival of the walls of the East Range and Chapter House of the medieval Blanchland

Abbey, all surviving remains of which are regarded as of national importance. The remains of the Chapter House survive particularly well; those of the East Range, while surviving less well and possibly overlain by later phases of building, nevertheless retain traces of medieval floor surfaces which enhance their importance. Other remains, notably of surfaces and east-west walls along the south side of the former cloister, are more difficult to interpret, but are likely to be associated with the medieval cloistral walk. With regards to artefacts uncovered in association with the walls of the East and South

Ranges, little of significance was found except for architectural fragments and window glass. With respect to the latter, the dense concentration of medieval painted glass partially-excavated in Trench 4 is of considerable importance in extending the repertoire of geometric grisaille design types for the north of England.

**Richard Carlton**  
 The Archaeological Practice

# Medieval Shotton

Additional work at Shotton Triangle has revealed more of Shotton medieval village, near Cramlington. It was first investigated in 2008 during excavations of Shotton Surface Mine, which led to the discovery of an Anglo-Saxon settlement that may be a precursor to the village (see *Archaeology in Northumberland* 21) as well as prehistoric boundaries and settlement activity.

## Previous Work

Today, Shotton village is considerably smaller than its medieval counterpart, which documents show had 30 tenements in 1325.

The excavations in 2008 revealed that medieval Shotton had a two row village layout, consisting of a wide open space, or green, flanked by two rows of tofts (enclosures within which individual farms commonly stood). A rare example of a pottery kiln was discovered in the south row of tofts and pottery evidence showed the eastern end of the village was occupied from the late 12th century until it contracted in the mid-14th century. Another oven or kiln was found north of the present village, which supports documentary evidence that associates potters with the village over several generations.

## Geophysical survey and evaluation

In 2013, a proposed extension to the mine workings presented the opportunity for further investigations of the medieval village using geophysical survey and evaluation trenching. The survey identified magnetic anomalies associated with the south row of village tofts. Whilst the individual tofts themselves were not clearly distinguished, their southern limit could be broadly followed, particularly at the eastern end where a well-defined linear anomaly marked their limit.

A large area of magnetic disturbance within the tofts suggests another



pottery kiln, with anomalies that may represent chambers of a kiln and associated works. However, this lay beyond the area of proposed mine workings and was not investigated further. Elsewhere, evidence for a number of boundary features was found: to the south a former post-medieval field boundary and trackway as well as a feature possibly predating ridge and furrow cultivation; and to the west likely boundary ditches of possible medieval or prehistoric origin.

Trenches were excavated to test the results of the geophysical survey and establish if significant archaeology occurred in areas of the site affected by the proposed mining.

## Three principal areas of archaeological interest were identified:

1. South-eastern part of the medieval village: excavated features included, a ditch that appears to represent a rear toft boundary and other features of medieval date. Pottery associated with these features shows them to date from the same period of activity associated with the rest of the medieval village.
2. Western end of the medieval village: the boundaries identified by geophysical survey revealed the hitherto unknown western extent of the village. Some features suggest settlement activity, whilst the presence of medieval plough furrows beyond the western ditch suggests it represents the limit of more intensive activity associated with the village.
3. Undated features and watercourse: two undated gullies found relatively

close to the Anglo-Saxon settlement may represent peripheral features associated with it.

## Discussion

Although the remains at the western end of the village lie within the projected north row of tofts, these were not encountered and the effect of local topography upon the earlier village layout is unclear. It is possible that the plots represented by the boundaries were focused along another axis, such as a possible medieval precursor to Shotton Lane. At present, with only a small portion exposed of the western end of the village, questions remain as to how this new evidence fits within the medieval village layout, which only further investigation will illuminate.

Archaeological evidence from the evaluation trenches consisted of a series of gullies or ditches with no structural evidence. This is not necessarily indicative of their absence but could reflect the limited archaeological intervention and the paucity of survival of such remains at the site. Indeed very few structures survived within the fully exposed tofts at the Site 1 excavation.

Sherds of pottery from the west end of the village belonged to a single jar of Shotton Ware, probably manufactured in the village in the late 12th to late 13th century. Although the geophysical survey suggests that no additional undiscovered kilns lie within the western area, the presence of a lump of slag raises the possibility that, like the eastern end of the village, the western end may also have been host to industrial activity.

This work was funded by Banks Mining and undertaken by AD Archaeology. It was required by the Planning Service on the advice of the Conservation Team.

**Warren Muncaster**  
AD Archaeology

# Did Bamburgh shipwreck inspire first coastguards?



A large Spring tide in 2013 partially exposed a shipwreck on the beach below Bamburgh Castle. Bamburgh residents have reported that this wreck appears sporadically with many remembering playing on it as children in the 1960s.

This time however Maritime Archaeology Sea Trust (MAST) archaeologists Jessica Berry and Kevin Stratford, together with local archaeologists and volunteers, took the opportunity to conduct an extensive survey including dendrochronology. The work was funded through a grant from the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership's Sustainable Development Fund.

The shipwreck was in the intertidal zone to the east of Bamburgh Castle and was only exposed for roughly one hour either side of low-water slack. The site itself sits within its own scour which, along with the tidal conditions, meant it was never completely dry. The wreck appeared to contain the exposed remains of the port side of a wooden sailing vessel lying on its starboard side

with its stern inshore. The exposed section of the wreck consisted of the hull structure of the port side and the exposed deck beams suggest the possible survival of decks below the sand.

Excitingly, the dendrochronology survey yielded a terminus post quem date of 1768 – meaning that the timber in question was felled in or after 1768. The dendrochronological analysis, which was conducted by Dr Roderick Bale of University of Wales Trinity Saint David also established that the timber originates from the East of England making the wreck British.

The date of 1768 is significant as it means that the ship potentially sailed along the east coast while Dr Sharp, one of the trustees of the Crewe Trust, was in residence at Bamburgh Castle. Dr Sharp was so concerned for sailors in the treacherous waters around Bamburgh that in 1781 he set up what is recognised as the first coastguard system in the world. The first coastguard at Bamburgh did not only warn ships of the coastline but also provided refuge at the

castle for shipwrecked sailors, stored their cargo and buried the dead.

This remarkable survival on the beach at Bamburgh is not only extremely rare in terms of the extent of the survival but also because it could provide a direct link to the work of Dr Sharp. Historic England recognised the national importance of the wreck site and added it to the National Heritage List as a Scheduled Monument in 2014 (<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1418570>). It is hoped that further research of historical maritime documents might eventually reveal the identity of the ship.

A massive tidal surge in late 2013 resulted in a large dump sand in the area of the wreck and, for now, the wreck is buried once more.

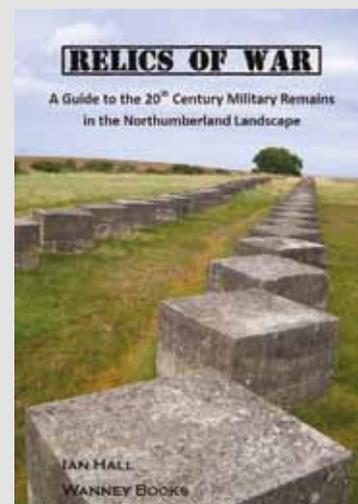
Full report and more information available on the MAST website – [www.thisismast.org](http://www.thisismast.org)

**Jessica Turner**  
Northumberland Coast AONB

# Wilds of Wanney

Local publisher Wilds of Wanney has a growing catalogue of small, low cost books exploring the history, culture and landscape of Northumberland. Author and publisher Ian Hall has a particular interest in the 20th century remains of the county and has contributed to this magazine in the past (see *Archaeology in Northumberland* 20). Recent titles

include *Relics of War: a guide to the 20th century military remains in the Northumberland landscape* as well as a new presentation of Henry MacLauchlan's surveys of Watling Street and Dere Street. For more titles see the Wilds of Wanney website at [www.wildsofwanney.co.uk](http://www.wildsofwanney.co.uk).



# British Rock Art News

## England's Rock Art database and website updated and expanded

It is now eight years since the launch of the England's Rock Art (ERA) website and database in 2008. The site was launched following the Herculean recording efforts of volunteers who took part in the Northumberland and Durham Rock Art Pilot (NADRAP) Project. A great deal has happened since then in terms of recording technologies, discoveries, and excavations. The completion in September 2013 of a second recording project in West Yorkshire: Carved Stone Investigations: Rombalds Moor (CSIRM) provided an opportunity to update and expand both the database and the website. An additional 500 panels have been added to the original 1500 from the North East, each with extensive records comprising measurements, descriptions, drawings, photographs, and 3D models. These records include comprehensive evaluations of the current condition of the panels, and assessments of future risks. This type of information helped Historic England to decide which carvings warranted formal Scheduling in Northumberland and Durham and it is hoped that the recording carried out for the West Yorkshire rock art will be instrumental in similar Scheduling in this area in the future.



**Prehistoric rock art at Ketley Crag.** Seventeen sites comprising 65 panels of prehistoric carvings were scheduled following work by the Northumberland and Durham Rock Art Project between 2004 and 2009. A diverse range of panels and motifs in various locations have been scheduled including Ketley Crag, Buttoney, Whitsunbank, Amerside Law and Lemmington Wood which also includes an early medieval runic inscription.

The updated website includes a new section on the CSIRM Project, and updated pages on recording techniques and recent excavations. New images of the Rombalds Moor rock art have been added to the Gallery pages.

Watch out for more updates at: <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/era/>

Kate Sharpe

# Community archaeology north of Hadrian's Wall

In 2014 the Tynedale North of the Wall Archaeology Group was formed, as a direct result of the North Pennines AONB Partnership's Altogether Archaeology project. The group was established to record the archaeology of all human activity in the area immediately north of Hadrian's Wall since prehistoric times. Principally, but not exclusively, interested in prehistory, the group, whose president is Stan Beckensall, currently has a membership of 30. The group carries out detailed field surveys and reports on their work on their website, and through leading guided walks and providing a programme of evening talks.

In 2015 the group, independently and also as part of the final year of Altogether Archaeology fieldwork, surveyed an area of some 40 hectares north of Sewingshields Crag. Using Historic Environment Record data, results of Tim Gates' 2004 aerial survey, the National Mapping Programme (NMP) data with lidar, the group investigated a number of previously known features and identified new sites, including a potentially large ploughed-out cairn with a cup-marked boulder on its



Decorated boulder revealed during detailed survey work by Altogether Archaeology and Tynedale North of the Wall Archaeology Group volunteers. Note the "checkerboard" pattern at the bottom.

south western edge. Further detailed investigation of the cup-marked boulder found the decoration to have been far more extensive than previously thought. Careful examination identified a more than 30 simple cup marks and a number of incised grooves which appear to be of human origin, rather than through natural processes. One of these grooves has a distinct serpentine shape with indications of the groove being broadened into a head at its base. In the central area bounded by these grooves there is what appears to be a 'grid' or 'checkerboard' motif. This is of itself extremely rare with only one other such example in Northumberland at Fowberry Enclosure. Our survey has revealed the Davy's Lee stone to be located in the perimeter of a low mound that we believe could be the remains of a cairn, truncated by medieval ploughing evidenced by the

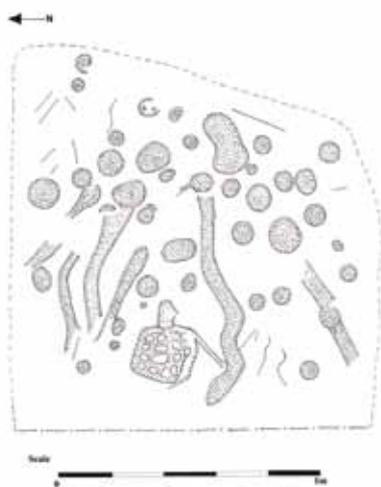
10m wide ridge and furrow which occurs throughout the enclosure.

The work has also cast doubt on previous interpretations of a stone circle at the west of the project area, which may have been a heavily robbed burial cairn. It has also identified at least two unrecorded hut circles outside an enclosure, tentatively dated to the Bronze Age; and has provided valuable context to the previously recorded remains through the identification and recording of numerous field banks.

**Phil Bowyer**

**Tynedale North of the Wall  
Archaeology Group**

[http://tynedalearchaeologygroup.  
btck.co.uk/](http://tynedalearchaeologygroup.btck.co.uk/)



Drawing of the cups, grid and channel motifs by Anne Bowyer (TNOW).

# The Vicar's Pele, Corbridge

The Vicar's Pele stands on the south-east side of St Andrew's churchyard and on the north side of Corbridge market place. It is a three-storied tower house, probably dating to the first half of the 14th century. The entrance to the Pele is through a doorway in the east gable wall, from which a mural stair rises to first floor level, and another doorway leads into a vaulted ground floor chamber. Apart from a modern 'minstrel's gallery' at the west end, the second and third floors are missing. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and Grade I listed building and lies within a Conservation Area.

The Pele was recently sold by Northumberland Estates and work to convert it into an events venue was undertaken through Spence and Dower Architects. The conversion included provision of a toilet with mains drainage and water in the south-west angle of the vaulted ground floor chamber and a steel gallery with glass balustrading at second floor level. Both alterations were predicated on minimal intervention into the historic fabric.

To inform these works it was necessary to establish the depth and character of the tower foundations and see if there were any surviving floor levels by excavating a test pit at the south-west corner of the vaulted chamber.

Below the existing flagged floor of the chamber, possibly laid when the Pele was restored by the Duke of Northumberland in 1910, the excavation revealed significant post-medieval disturbance and raising of floor levels. This may have occurred when the basement was refitted as a 'lock-up' in about 1825. Most of the deposits consisted of building rubble, including numerous broken sandstone roof flags, and sheep bones (metapodials) which had been used to hang the flags. Part of a horse carcass, a cup-marked



West wall of Vicar's Pele exposed during excavations.



Roof flag stone with bone peg.

stone, and a sandstone 'wrestler' ridge tile were also recovered.

Apart from vestiges of a construction cut for the south wall, no in-situ medieval deposits or features survived within the test pit area. Some mid-late 13th century pottery was recovered, all residual in post-medieval contexts. This probably derived from disturbance to medieval

deposits or features within, or perhaps even pre-dating, the Pele. No dateable material was recovered which could be firmly associated with the construction phase of the building.

**John Nolan**  
Northern Counties Archaeological Services

# Layers of localism and regeneration

Berwick-upon-Tweed is a unique place. An historic walled town in the far north-east corner of England at the mouth of the river Tweed, it sits on an elevated peninsular in a dramatic coastal setting. With surviving medieval layout, 400 years of bridge building, refined domestic and civic architecture and outstanding military engineering, it has considerable animated variety, atmosphere, quality and sense of place. Nikolaus Pevsner described it as “one of the most exciting towns in England, a real town, with the strongest sense of enclosure”.

It is a ‘real town’ with people who care about the town’s historic legacy but also the provision of local jobs, affordable homes, an ageing population and struggling tourist economy. The succession of defences and circuit of stone walls, first laid down by Edward I in 1296 and later subsumed within the magnificent Elizabethan ramparts, continue to bestow a muscular embrace around the town.

The Walls however, do not signify a barrier to change or delineate a boundary for heritage assets to be preserved in aspic but they do present modern day challenges if Berwick is to move forward and grow. The 21st century presents a struggle of a different kind that requires intervention and concerted action.

Like many border towns Berwick has tremendous development and tourist potential; its built heritage is recognised as a valuable asset but requires investment. The strategic planning process identified a need to deliver an economic transformation and step change that is so desperately required.

As a result, a five-year ‘Heritage-led Regeneration Scheme’ has successfully been delivered by Northumberland County Council which concludes this year. With external funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic England and



the former One North East (along with owner contributions) the scheme has invested £2.8 million via a Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) and two Area Partnership Schemes (APS). Community input has been keenly provided through the Conservation Area Advisory Group (CAAG). In existence since 1999, this forum has grown in confidence and stature, and has been instrumental in delivering the conservation projects.

The combined Berwick Historic Area Improvement Scheme (BHAIS) has delivered: 11 conservation repair projects in Bridge Street with its high concentration of listed buildings; 16 repair and enhancement projects in Castlegate (a gateway into the town from the Station approach); and five substantial THI projects around the historic junction of Bridge Street and Berwick Old Bridge (an iconic ‘Lowry view’).



Tradition skills – shop front repairs



Photography archive student recording Cowe Buildings

These discrete areas are where the smaller, locally independent trades and people are situated – artisan businesses selling unique items and products, as well as cafés, restaurants and a micro pub, all situated on the periphery of the town centre in historic buildings as well as often living over the shop. Many have taken up former empty premises as a direct result of the grant scheme, particularly in Years 2 and 3 that saw the scheme become oversubscribed.

The grant scheme has enabled a comprehensive ‘top down’ approach to structural fabric repairs to ensure the historic building is secured, protected and enhanced. This not only benefits the whole historic asset and builds up a critical mass of repaired buildings, it enhances an important Berwick characteristic – its roofscape.

Through joined-up grant applications (sometimes divided between ‘top and bottom’) the grants have enabled many improved shop frontages as well as utilising traditional repair techniques, materials and skills. These have been carried out mostly using local contractors who have benefitted from the conservation work with

# n in Berwick-upon-Tweed

additional skills training and partnership working with the Conservation Project Officer and Historic England.

The heritage projects also supported a number of complementary initiatives with other funders and volunteers, including: design work and improvement of the public realm, facilitating building recording and contributing to an enhanced Berwick archive. It has broadened the scope of understanding by capturing the ephemeral things – the discarded remnants of past industries, memory, anecdotal evidence and ‘atmosphere’, that can only be experienced by spending time in a place.

An artist photographer, a writer and a filmmaker were commissioned to ‘capture the magic’ of the now vacant ‘cockle Cowe buildings’ (with 130 years of family history) through a different creative discipline. A more abstract, but no less valuable method of recording buildings and people, a book of photographs, poems and film (that was shown five times in one day to a sold out audience) are both evocative and stimulating as they contemplate the concept of heritage, memory, bygone times and ‘home’.

Like most projects within the historic environment we express an overriding need to ‘conserve the past for future generations’, yet so rarely engage the



School project at work



LEFT:  
No 2 Castlegate  
before works

BELOW:  
No 2 Castlegate  
after works



future generations in the process. The THI has also supported two mentoring schemes with young people – one with a planning undergraduate who worked with Berwick Middle School and the other a photography archive student who has been recording the Cowe buildings.

The school pupils focused on Bridge Street. Ensuring cross-curriculum activities, the lesson plans include geography, history, design, creative writing and IT skills. Explaining ‘heritage-led regeneration’ to nine year olds was both enlightening and fascinating to watch. Their project entitled ‘Past, Present, Future’ was presented as an exhibition in Year 1 and 2 and they have continued to present their work to the annual Heritage Day in Berwick. The school has rolled out the project across five classes as a lasting legacy of the Berwick Historic Area Improvement Scheme.

The undergraduates who benefitted from the training/mentoring initiative both got first class honours degrees and continue to work in the field of planning/conservation and museum/archive recording.

AR

# Europe's lost frontiers: Doggerland a

The only inhabited lands on Earth that have not yet been explored in any depth by science are those that have been lost to the oceans. Rising global sea levels at the end of the last Ice Age inundated vast landscapes on continental shelves that had once been home to thousands of people. Across the world, these lands represent one of the last frontiers of geographical and archaeological exploration and Doggerland, occupying much of the North Sea basin between continental Europe and Britain and including the Northumbrian coast, is amongst the most significant of these lost lands. These Mesolithic, and earlier, landscapes contain not only evidence of the flora and fauna that its hunter-gatherer groups lived on but probably also provides a unique opportunity to identify traces of the

introduction of specific Neolithic practise into north-western Europe.

The potential importance of Doggerland to understanding the earlier prehistory of north-west Europe was initially appreciated by British geologist Clement Reid who, in 1913, published a book entitled *Submerged Forests*. Reid's study suggested that "... (in these areas) the geologist should be able to study ancient changes of sea-level, under such favourable conditions as to leave no doubt as to the reality and exact amount of these changes. The antiquary should find the remains of ancient races of man, sealed up with his weapons and tools. Here he will be troubled by no complications from rifled tombs, burials in older graves, false inscriptions, or accidental mixture. He ought to here find also implements of wood, basketwork,

or objects in leather, such as are so rarely preserved in deposits above the water-level."

*"...however, the submerged forests seem to be of little interest ... the archaeologist is inclined to say that they belong to the province of geology, and the geologist remarks that they are too modern to be worth his attention; and both pass on."*

Reid's pessimistic comments were largely fulfilled until recently. In 1998 a seminal article by Professor Bryony Coles and an increasing appreciation of the quantities of prehistoric material recovered from the seabed, raised awareness of these issues. Although established techniques of archaeological prospection were not suited to take such observations further a number of events changed this situation. Initially, research at the University of Birmingham revealed that marine seismic reflection surveys could be used to map the topography of the drowned landscapes and 45,000km<sup>2</sup> of inundated prehistoric landscape were recorded using data collected for energy exploration. A new European territory, somewhat larger than the Netherlands, was revealed along with its rivers, lakes and hills, coastlines and estuaries, wetlands and salt marshes. More recently, pioneering studies on the submarine site at Bouldner Cliff on the Solent used DNA recovered from archaeological sediments for palaeoenvironmental reconstruction. The results pushed back the presence, if not cultivation, of domesticated wheat in the UK by 2,000 years – suggesting that the nature of the



Britain and the North Sea showing the Dogger Bank.  
© North Sea Palaeolandscapes Project.

# and the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition

evidence from inundated coastal sites is different, or better preserved, than those further inland.

In 2016 the European Research Council will fund a new Advanced Grant project at the University of Bradford to build on these achievements. Cores will be extracted along two submarine Holocene river valleys identified by seismic mapping and data from sedimentary ancient DNA (sedaDNA) and palaeoenvironmental analysis will be used to build dynamic models of the changing geomorphology and ecology of Doggerland from around 10,000BC until its eventual total inundation around 5,500BC. In doing so the project will explore, in a manner never previously attempted, the re-settlement and abandonment of a previously inaccessible, prehistoric country off the eastern coasts of England and investigate how the transition from a hunter gatherer economy to farming occurred on the great plains that were ultimately lost to the sea.

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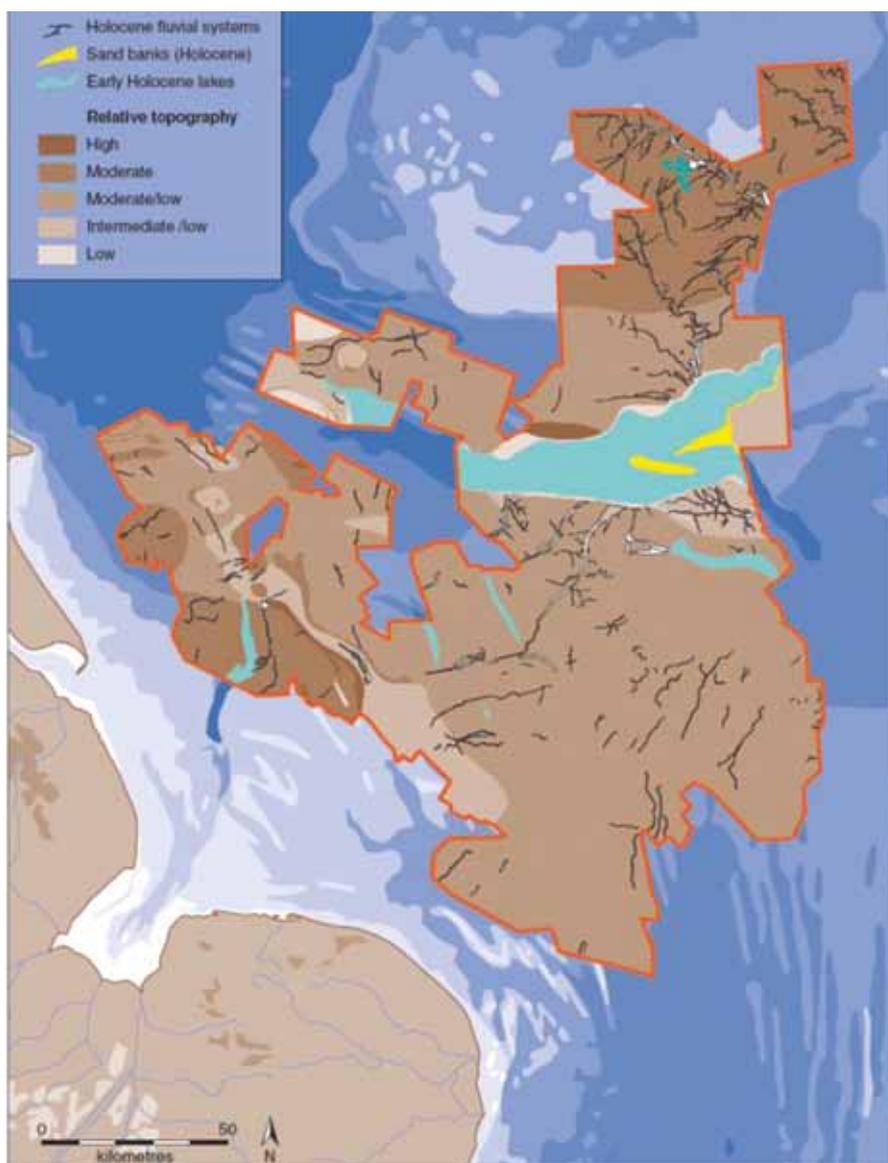
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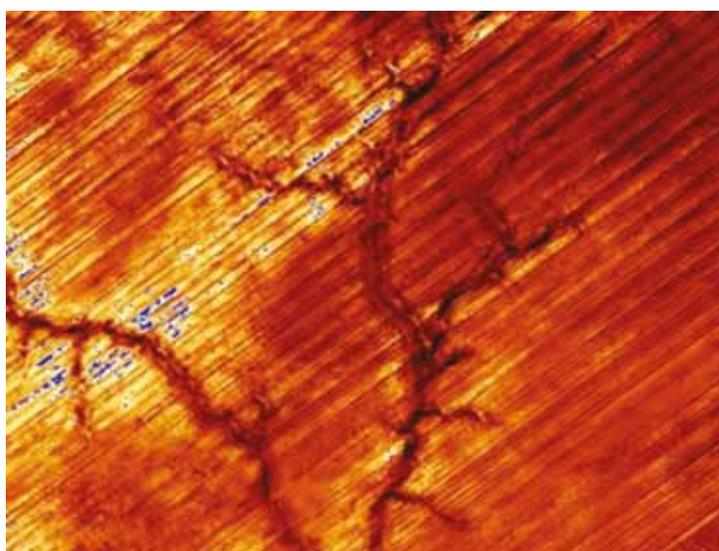
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Professor Vince Gaffney

School of Archaeological Sciences  
University of Bradford



Map of Eastern Mesolithic Doggerland showing topography and hydrology. © North Sea Palaeolandscapes Project.



Seismic view of a submarine river valley. © North Sea Palaeolandscapes Project.

# Archaeological Investigations at Well Hill

Three phases of archaeological investigation were carried out in advance of, and during, groundworks associated with the development of Well Hill Surface Mine site west of Stannington in south Northumberland. The fieldwork comprised two phases of 'strip, map and sample' investigations undertaken between July and August 2013 and in June 2014, with a phase of evaluation between March and April 2014. This invasive scheme of archaeological evaluation followed earlier assessment and evaluation undertaken between 2010 and 2012.

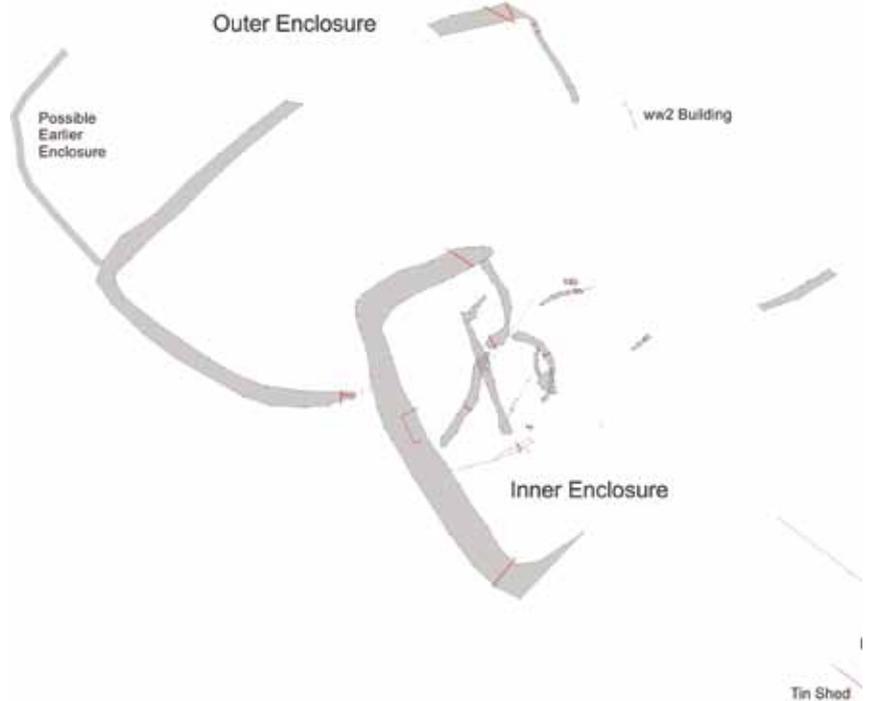
The stripping process carried out in 2013 revealed the remains of extensive ridge and furrow cultivation features running north-south, concrete foundations for a World War Two (WWII) structure in the east part of the site and a small, concentrated scatter of extremely coarse pottery of likely Iron Age origin in the centre of the stripped area.

The evaluation completed in April 2014 yielded significant archaeological results from three out of the 35 trenches. Towards the western boundary of the site this included a ditch feature that originated as a likely boundary feature of some age and in the north-east of the site, in Trenches 7 and 8, were the foundations of the WWII structure and ditches up to 1 metre deep, clearly of some antiquity.

The process of 'strip, map and sample' carried out in June 2014 in order to investigate the area of Trench 8 in more detail, revealed numerous features cut and built into the natural subsoil, principally a series of large ditches which appear to form two or more enclosures. Overlying the ditch fill and also within the enclosure, were several spreads of cobbles; one of which, a broad linear stone feature containing an alignment of squared stones with gaps to indicate possible post



Aerial view from the west (by T Spicer).



Plan of enclosures and associated features recorded following site stripping.

# ell Hill, Stannington

settings, may be structural. Elsewhere in the interior of the enclosure were numerous shallow gullies, some straight and others curvilinear, some obscured by later cobble spreads.

The character and scale of most of the internal gullies was rather similar, suggesting that they were cut for similar purposes, but no additional evidence was forthcoming to determine the nature and date of their function, ie, whether they were construction trenches for (round house) structures or merely drainage gullies. In general terms, the distribution of these gullies did not appear to form a distinctive pattern suggestive of structural arrangements and gives the impression of having been created over a longer timescale, perhaps in phases.

Most of the medieval pottery derived from the site came from within the inner enclosure. The pottery fragments included parts of a jar rim and two rod handles, as well as a large part of a green-glazed whiteware jug and a possible bowl or curfew of likely Tyneside origin. Three other large sherds, in a fine sandy brown fabric, were blackened on the inside, also suggesting a curfew (or at least some cooking-related activity); a curfew (from the French 'couvre feu') was a large domed vessel used to cover fire at night to reduce the risk of sparks without having to put the fire out.

In addition to the features represented by, or contained within, the inner and outer ditches, a number of other features are worthy of note. Notably, visible on aerial views of the site is another ditch, perhaps part of another enclosure west of that called the 'outer' ditch; this follows a course northwards from its junction with the southern arm of the latter and appears to be on a similar scale.

It is suggested that, while there is little evidence to determine phasing of the substantial ditches



View from north over Trench 8 of ditch features (part of outer enclosure) exposed during evaluation in the extreme north-east of the site.

forming possible enclosures, the most substantial ditch is, in form, similar to late Iron Age enclosures of a form common in the region. The form of this ditch suggests a protective function, quite possibly to corral stock against the incursions of predators, while those to the west, are much slighter and may have enclosed agricultural land rather than stock. The stone spreads and gullies in the interior of the principal enclosure appear to be later, the stone spreads probably having been inserted to form hardstanding for stock management. It is speculated that an earlier (perhaps Iron Age) enclosure, was reused and subsequently extended in the medieval period when it formed part

of a farmstead.

Evidence for later phases of activity on the site are provided in the form of two small fragments of 19th century domestic pottery, probably related to the modern farmstead, and six fragments of a NAAFI cup, presumably associated with the remains of documented WWII buildings.

This work was funded by Hargreaves UK and undertaken by The Archaeological Practice. It was required by the Planning Service on the advice of the Conservation Team.

**Richard Carlton**  
The Archaeological Practice

# New approaches at Yeavingering

Since 2005 The Gefrin Trust has supported a range of field investigations on the famous Anglo-Saxon palace site at Yeavingering in north Northumberland aimed at testing the viability of new archaeological applications. Following on from the integrated geophysical survey conducted across 2005-9 (see *Archaeology in Northumberland* 19), Durham University has continued to fulfil its role within the Trust in applying new approaches to the site.

In 2014-15, university research funding and funding from the Trust facilitated a pilot project. This has been used to build a geographic information system (GIS) of the site and its hinterland, as well as drawing together a range of different remote data sources. Although the work remains in progress, so far a wide range of data sets have been integrated and tested, including: LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) digital surface model data; site plans produced by Brian Hope-Taylor; and excavation plans from his 1977 volume. The data was further refined and adjusted to align with the results of aerial photography and geophysical survey of the site.

A similar range of data, together with historic mapping, has also been brought together for the land around Yeavingering Bell. This has revealed a number of potential multi-period features, including networks of settlements and field systems on several sides of the hill. A more detailed survey of some of these areas is currently underway, led by Al Oswald from Sheffield University and Stewart Ainsworth of the University of Chester, who are working together with the Durham University pilot and The Gefrin Trust. This suggests networks of Bronze Age and Late Iron Age and/or Romano-British settlements and field systems, as well as a barrow and possible standing



The Grandstand, marked out with an EfcO Strimmer.

stone to the south-east. A few of these early remains exhibit signs of remodelling.

In addition, images from the Hope-Taylor photographic archive have been reassessed, providing a new insight into the processes and stages of excavation across Areas A, B and D in the 1950s and 1960s. Using an aerial drone, Durham student Darren Oliver, is also creating photogrammetric 3D models (including infrared photography) of the site taken at different times of the year, while at a broader scale, data from the Historic Environment Record has been reviewed. Work is underway to look at the wider multi-period sites and sequences with a view to considering the palace in its early medieval hinterland and broader chronological framework.

The pilot project aims to create an informed basis from which to develop a research design for future exploratory survey and investigation on the site and its hinterland.

It might seem rather perverse to claim that the visibility of a few remains at a site can actually limit public understanding of its former appearance and extent, but we have all seen sites where casually sprinkled stumps of ‘conserved’

walling convey little more than pointing up a place where something old once stood. In one sense we are fortunate with Ad Gefrin, in that it is truly visually a blank slate, allowing us to ‘draw’ upon it what we wish. We are limited however, in that its status as a Scheduled Ancient Monument imposes limitations on the tools we might use on this ‘blank slate’. We cannot for example, make any damaging, indelible markings upon it, such as marking out the line of foundation trenches with embedded concrete, or wood. However, we have been lightly marking out their line simply by cutting the grass with a lawnmower or strimmer – the equivalent of a light chalk-line on the slate. In 2015 we marked out two structures to trial the method: Edwin’s Great Hall and the Grandstand. Both were given no more than a second cut in late August; judge the results for yourself.

For more information on Ad Gefrin, the work of the trust and updates, visit [www.gefrintrust.org](http://www.gefrintrust.org).

**Dr Sarah Semple, Brian Buchanan, Darren Oliver, Al Oswald, Stuart Ainsworth and Roger Miket**



Edwin's Hall, marked out with a Flymo.



The site of Yeaving: digitized and geo-rectified plans of the palace complex and associated features. Use of aerial photograph with kind permission of Tim Gates. Composite image: © The Yeaving Project and Tim Gates.

# Altogether Archaeology in the North Pennines

## Introduction

Altogether Archaeology is the North Pennines AONB Partnership's community archaeology project, largely funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. After a pilot phase, the main project began in 2012 and ran for three years through until November 2015. Nearly 600 volunteers registered with the project and took part in a wide range of fieldwork projects and associated events across the North Pennines in County Durham, Cumbria and Northumberland. The volunteers have now organised themselves into a new group, retaining the name 'Altogether Archaeology' (AA). They aim to continue to undertake survey and excavation projects throughout the North Pennines in years to come; anyone interested in the area's archaeological heritage, regardless of past experience, is welcome to join this group – you can register your interest by sending an email to [altogetherarchaeology@gmail.com](mailto:altogetherarchaeology@gmail.com)

In July 2014, at the National Association of AONBs conference in Penrith, the Altogether Archaeology project was awarded the prestigious Bowland Award. This is awarded annually for the 'the best project, best practice or outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)'. The award is appropriate acknowledgement of the fantastic work of the project volunteers and all the professional archaeologists who have helped to deliver the project over recent years.

## Kirkhaugh

For a while in July 2014, the AA project was the subject of the most read story on the entire BBC News website; a story which must have been read by millions of people around the world! This was the result of the discovery by four local schoolboys of a priceless gold tress-ring during the excavation of a burial



Local schoolboys ....and.... with the newly discovered gold tress-ring at Kirkhaugh, July 2014. Photo: Marc Johnstone.

mound at Kirkhaugh, near Alston. The object, one of the earliest metal objects ever found in Britain, was one of a pair, the other having been found in 1935 by the great-great grandfather of two of the boys! The burial mound at Kirkhaugh dates from about 2,400BC. Judging by the finds, which, in addition to the gold, include jet buttons, top quality flint arrowheads, a pottery beaker, and a 'cushion stone' (a hand-held portable anvil, used for working copper and gold), the burial was probably that of an early metalworker who may have been in the area looking for sources of copper when he died. There is only one comparable burial in the whole of Britain, the famous example of the Amesbury Archer from near Stonehenge, the excavation of which was directed by Andrew Fitzpatrick, who also directed the Kirkhaugh dig (assisted by The Archaeological Practice, Newcastle upon Tyne). Analysis of the Amesbury Archer's teeth proved that he was born in the Alps, and for some reason travelled to Stonehenge where he died. Sadly, the AA excavation of the Kirkhaugh mound failed to find any bones or teeth (they had rotted away due to the acid soil), so we will probably never know whether the individual buried here had such exotic origins as the Amesbury Archer, though



The gold tress-ring from Kirkhaugh. Photo: Elisabeth Langton-Airey.

there is a fair chance that he did. In addition to the burial mound, a sizeable assemblage of Mesolithic flint was also recovered during the excavation; clearly there had been a Mesolithic settlement of some kind here, perhaps 5,000 years before the burial mound was built. (See *Archaeology in Northumberland* vol 21, for more information about the 1935 discovery).

## **Epiacum and Gilderdale Burn**

Over recent years much work has been undertaken at *Epiacum* (Whitley Castle) Roman fort, just north of Alston. A new not-for-profit company, Epiacum Heritage Ltd, has been set up to oversee the future management of this very important site; much fascinating information is available on the company website – [www.epiacumheritage.co.uk](http://www.epiacumheritage.co.uk)

# Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



*Epiacum* molehill survey in progress.



A jet bead, one of several hundred Roman objects found during the *Epiacum* molehill survey over the past 5 years

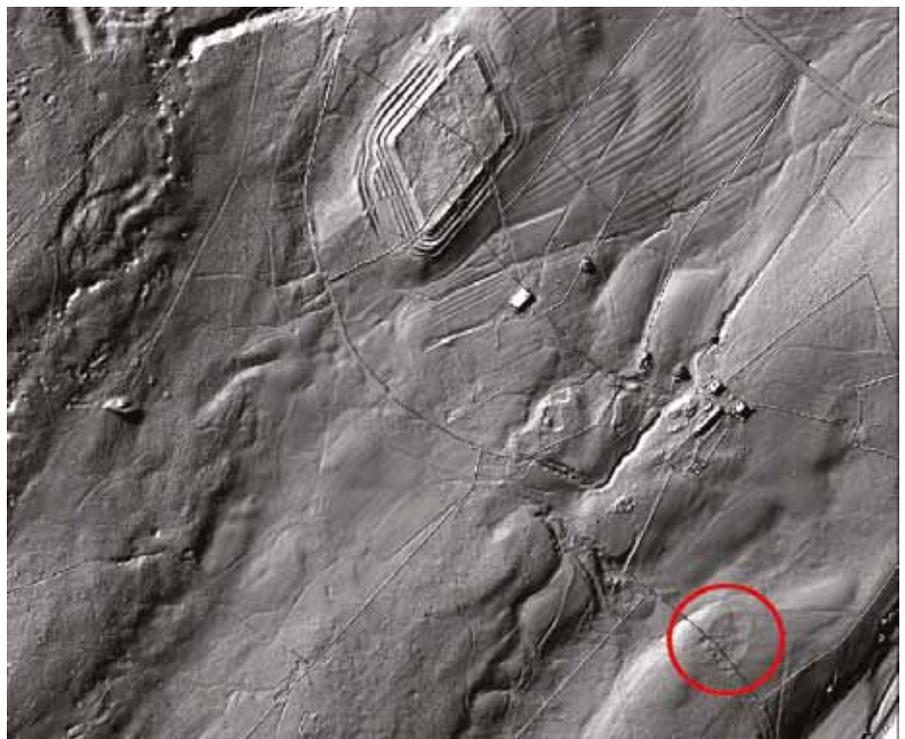
[epiacumheritage.org](http://epiacumheritage.org). The Roman fort, linked to forts at Carvoran on Hadrian's Wall and Kirkby Thore on the A66 via the road known to us as the Maiden Way, must have been sited here in order to oversee lead and silver mining in the North Pennines. Detailed archaeological survey of the fort and its landscape setting was undertaken by English Heritage (now part of Historic England; download the report at: <http://research.historicengland.org.uk/number/89/2009>) as part of the 'Miner-Farmer' project on Alston Moor. Subsequent work undertaken by AA volunteers in partnership with Epiacum Heritage has included the annual molehill survey, resulting in the recovery of hundreds of Roman artefacts such as pottery, coins, beads of glass and jet, iron nails and a little bronze dolphin. All objects recovered during the molehill survey, which has now taken place each spring for five years, are recorded and catalogued with the same precision as if they were from an excavation and a full report on the results is in preparation.

During the Miner-Farmer project, about twenty previously unrecorded roundhouse settlements of presumed Iron Age or Roman date were recorded by Historic England within a few kilometres of *Epiacum*. During September 2015, an excavation was completed of one of these settlements, at Gilderdale Burn, close by the fort. This was directed by Stewart Ainsworth (of Channel 4's Time Team and Chester University) and Richard Carlton

(The Archaeological Practice).

Results suggest that the site dates from the pre-Roman Iron Age and was abandoned at about the time the Roman fort was built. Analysis of samples from the hearth of a timber-built roundhouse demonstrates that the people living here grew cereals, including spelt wheat and six-row barley, and also gathered wild resources including hazelnuts. They presumably also kept cattle, although no evidence for this was found. Using evidence from lidar

(light detection and ranging) survey, the volunteers also uncovered two small areas of a well-preserved and apparently very extensive sandstone-slabbed surface surviving apparently intact to the south of the fort. This has been interpreted as a largely intact Roman parade ground (or waggon park); if the former then it is a very rare find within the context of Roman Britain. Volunteers also completed a detailed survey of the ruined historic farm building of Holymire, adjacent to the Roman



Lidar image of *Epiacum* Roman fort and surrounding area. The Maiden Way Roman road (overlain by medieval ridge and furrow) can be clearly seen passing north-south to the east of the fort. The roundhouse settlement of Gilderdale Burn is ringed in red. (Lidar image © Historic England/North Pennines AONB).

# Altogether Archaeology

fort, which dates back probably to the 17th century and in the future may be consolidated and developed into a visitor centre.

## **Lidar Landscapes: Allen Valleys and Hexhamshire**

Working in partnership with Stewart Ainsworth, a group of AA volunteers have spent a couple of years examining lidar maps of the Allen Valleys and Hexhamshire in the search for previously unrecognised archaeological sites. Over 800 'new' sites have been discovered, including roundhouse settlements of Iron Age and Roman date, medieval settlements and extensive field systems of various dates. In addition to these 'new' sites, the lidar survey has uncovered additional information about many sites that were already known but never previously studied in any detail. As a result of all this work, the historic environment record of the Allen Valleys and Hexhamshire, previously largely dominated by post-medieval sites, now includes a fascinating range of sites extending back into prehistoric times. All of this information will be entered onto the county Historic Environment Record and will be accessible through Keys to the Past. [www.keystothepast.info](http://www.keystothepast.info)

## **Northumberland National Park landscape surveys**

In partnership with the Northumberland National Park Authority, and the recently established Tynedale North of the Wall community archaeology group (founded by AA volunteer Phil Bowyer) important archaeological surveys of extensive landscapes have been completed at Sewingshields, Davy's Lee and Ravensheugh see p 32. These have included the careful recording of a range of sites of prehistoric, Roman and medieval date, demonstrating that the land around Hadrian's Wall contains much important archaeology in addition to Roman military sites. These surveys were completed in partnership with Oxford Archaeology North. The AA volunteers also completed geophysical surveys of six milecastles on Hadrian's Wall in partnership with Durham University. This work was designed to improve our understanding of the purpose of the milecastles and thus of the way in which the entire Hadrian's Wall complex was originally intended to function. Although the results are variable, they tend to suggest that many of the milecastles may never have had substantial roads passing through them. The implications of

this require careful thought and further fieldwork may be justified in order to clarify the results.

## **North Pennines Virtual Museum (NPVM)**

When important finds are made in the North Pennines, they usually end up in museums outside the area; for example in Newcastle, Barnard Castle, Carlisle, or even London. The North Pennines Virtual Museum (NPVM) is an initiative to bring such finds together, so that they can be appreciated by local people or others with an interest in the area. It has been set up in collaboration with the Weardale Museum (Ireshopeburn), with specialist advice from Marc Johnstone of The Archaeological Practice. It was officially opened in July 2015 and currently includes about 60 objects, such as prehistoric stone axes and carved stones, Roman altars and coins, early medieval coffins, remains associated with the lead industry, and the anchor of the Titanic (partly made in Weardale). Why not take a look – you can find it at [www.npvm.org.uk](http://www.npvm.org.uk). The virtual museum will never be 'full' – we hope that people will continue to suggest lots more objects for possible inclusion and details of how to do so can be found on the website.

Further information about the Altogether Archaeology project is available on the North Pennines AONB website ([www.northpennines.org](http://www.northpennines.org)) where links to all project reports will eventually be available. Please note that any questions about the new Altogether Archaeology group should be addressed to [altogetherarchaeology@gmail.com](mailto:altogetherarchaeology@gmail.com) and not to the AONB Partnership.

**Paul Frodsham**  
North Pennines AONB



Gilderdale Burn, Stewart Ainsworth explaining the excavations to visitors, August 2014.

# Belsay Castle

In 2014, AD Archaeology was commissioned by English Heritage to undertake an archaeological excavation in advance of the upgrading of lightning protection at Belsay Castle – a 15<sup>th</sup> century tower house with an attached range of early 17<sup>th</sup> century buildings. A series of six test pits, 1m by 1m in size and 0.50m deep, were hand-excavated adjacent to the walls and three produced evidence of archaeological remains.

A trench adjacent to the southern wall of the Tower revealed the foundation plinth and a course of foundation stones from the southern face of the Tower. The foundation plinth, which was only partially exposed, consisted of two layers of roughly laid sandstone blocks and fragments (up to 0.30m by 0.20m in size), the lowest of which projected 0.30m south of the line of the Tower wall itself. Above the plinth was a wall foundation layer consisting of a single course of tightly-jointed rectangular sandstone blocks, 0.30m in height set in a yellow-white mortar. This wall foundation layer was overlain by a course of thinner blocks with an offset which stands exposed above the present ground level. An east-west stone-capped drain was located 0.60m south of the wall. The capping stones were only partially exposed but were unworn suggesting that this was constructed as a subterranean feature. The drain ran east-west parallel to the line of the wall of the Tower and may represent a feature of medieval date.

A trench next to the northern wall of the Tower revealed a cobbled surface of likely medieval date. One of the connecting trenches to link to the cables on the walls exposed a sandstone structure abutting the north wall of the Tower. It consisted of two dressed sandstone blocks abutting the Tower wall, with their long-axes north-south, set 1.65m apart. Running north-south between these two blocks was an alignment of four sandstone blocks, averaging



Probable medieval cobbled surface next to the Tower.

0.40m by 0.30m by 0.35m in size. The southern side of the alignment of four blocks was 0.35m from the north wall of the Tower. The stone structure lay directly beneath the garderobe chute on the north face of the Tower and it is probable that it relates to this feature. One possible interpretation is that it formed a foundation for a superstructure (perhaps in timber) to deflect waste from the garderobe into a drain and prevent it accumulating at the base of the wall.

A trench against the western wall of the North Range revealed a cobbled surface of probable medieval date at the base of the trench.

The structural remains and cobbled surfaces were not disturbed by the works. Following their recording they were covered with membrane and a layer of soil to ensure their preservation in situ. Whilst it is difficult to interpret features from such small-scale interventions the discovery and recording of the structural elements associated with the medieval Tower and the location of the cobbled surfaces represents



Sandstone structure abutting the Tower.

a useful contribution to the understanding of the archaeology of the site.

**Jon McKelvey**  
AD Archaeology

# Heritage at Risk

Historic England (Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England) has been campaigning on behalf of heritage at risk since the creation of their Buildings at Risk Register in 1998. The Register has expanded since then and now includes all nationally designated heritage assets and locally designated conservation areas (<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/>)

The Heritage at Risk Register provides an annual snapshot of historic sites known to be at risk from neglect, decay or inappropriate development. There are 302 entries on the North East 2015 Heritage at Risk Register, making up 5.4% of the national total of 5,534 entries.

Historic England could not encourage and deliver successful projects without local partnerships with owners, local authorities and other agencies and groups who also think it is crucial to tackle heritage at risk.

The historic buildings and landscapes of the North East are under constant attack from an array of implacable enemies, natural or otherwise. With willing owners and partners, we can continue to help to understand the overall condition of our historic sites and focus attention on the neediest cases. Critically,

we need to identify issues and options before repair programmes start, and bring together individuals and organisations to deliver sustainable solutions. Last year we removed 27 heritage assets from the Register in the North East – 11 in Northumberland and many of these feature in the pages of this magazine.

Using Historic England grant aid a rare heather thatched barn has been fully repaired at Tow House, Bardon Mill, a number of important structures were repaired, including the monastic cell and tower on Coquet Island, and vegetation was cleared at Wark Castle. Other assets grant-aided by Historic England recently range from several buildings within Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Areas to the survey of important mill machinery at Linnels Mill and a rare glasshouse at Felton Park.

Natural England's Countryside Stewardship scheme is re-launched this year and will bolster an already successful partnership. Last year their funding and advice removed Mohopehead lead mine, West Allen and the lime kiln at Little Mill, Longhoughton from the Register. This year we are funding a joint research project to find effective ways of controlling bracken, which threatens to overwhelm our upland

landscapes. Successful clearance of bracken is already occurring on Harehaugh hillfort and sites in the Ingram valley (see *Archaeology in Northumberland* 21).

We also need to continue to work with those who manage and care for Places of Worship in the region like the community at Christ Church, Hepple who successfully removed their church from the Register last year. Historic England provides expert advice to the Heritage Lottery Fund to enable them to deliver their Grants for Places of Worship scheme. The HLF are also supporting projects like Inspired Futures, which builds local capacity to tackle heritage at risk.

Encouragingly, there is increasing awareness amongst community and volunteer groups that their contribution in the fight to reduce risks to heritage has a lasting legacy and it is important that we all continue to provide support for the development of best practice, skills and events so that we build on our success and enable more people to get involved with heritage at risk projects.

**Kate Wilson**  
**Historic England**



Felton Park glass house before repairs. Photo by Richard Barnes.



Felton Park glass house after repairs. Photo by Robin Dower.



Tow House after repairs. Photo © Historic England.

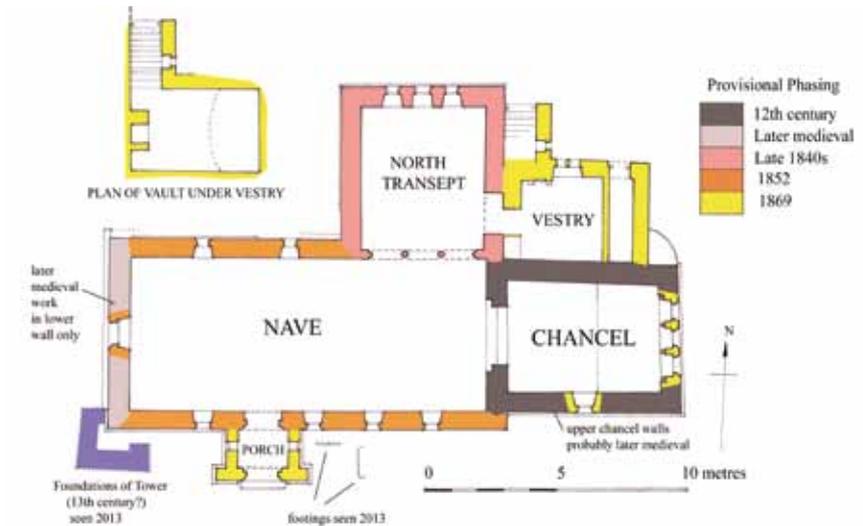
# Excavations at Bolton Chapel

Archaeological monitoring was conducted in May and June 2013 during groundworks associated with the excavation of trenches for new services at Bolton Chapel (NGR NU 10630 13674), near Glanton in Northumberland. Bolton Chapel, a Grade II Listed Building, is a chapel-of-ease situated in the Parish of Edlingham and dates to at least the 12th century. It sits upon a raised mound and enclosure of probable prehistoric origin and is of significant historical interest.

The principal findings of the present series of excavations are that significant structural remains of the medieval period survive in the area between the south wall of the nave and the west wall of the porch. The excavated remains in this area are interpreted as those of a 13th century tower, perhaps a later addition to the Norman church. Subsequently, the plinth of the small south-west tower appears to have been destroyed down to ground level before the west wall of the nave was rebuilt at some time in the later medieval period.

Other structural remains uncovered during these works, including those of a 19th century boiler room on the north side of the nave, are of minor significance, although the investigation of the latter did uncover a re-used carved stone, probably a small grave slab dating to the late 13th or 14th centuries. Elsewhere, the excavations revealed a number of burials, some at shallow depths and very close to the chapel structure, suggesting that the site has been used as a burial ground since the medieval period and graves are likely to occur anywhere within the bounds of the chapel and attached burial ground.

The excavations at Bolton Chapel have increased its structural and historical complexity and



Interpretive plan of Bolton Chapel.

enhanced the status of the site, already known as that of an 'early', probably pre-Christian religious site. The chapel is now included in the Flodden Virtual Museum site on account of its role as an overnight resting station for the English Army on its way to the Battle of Flodden in 1513.

This work was funded by Whittingham Parochial Church Council and undertaken by The Archaeological Practice.

**Richard Carlton and Peter Ryder**  
The Archaeological Practice



Inscribed medieval grave cover discovered during the excavations.



View of excavated remains from the south-east.

# Keeping it local:

## community involvement in heritage condition surveys

The Otterburn Ranges occupy some 23,000 hectares of moorland in the southern Cheviots and boasts one of the highest concentrations of multi-period archaeological monuments in the country. About 95% of the Ranges are in the Northumberland National Park and it is the shared aim of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) to ensure that the monuments are well managed and, as far as possible on an active military training area, that they are brought to the attention of the public at large. Whilst visits to some of the monuments can be arranged during non-firing times, over the past few years some of the archaeological sites on the Ranges have been brought to a wider audience by featuring on television and radio programmes or by write-ups in popular magazines.

One of the more successful methods of monument management has involved members of the local community who survey the monuments and produce a condition assessment report. To understand how this has come about we must turn the clock back some four years when archaeologists from the National Park, Historic England and the MOD organised tuition sessions in Monument Condition Assessments in response to requests from members of the public. Site reces, case studies, workshops and safety briefings were all part of the training package, but the main ingredient was, and continues to be, the enthusiasm, goodwill and archaeological nous of the volunteer surveyors. Otterburn Ranges is home to some 75 scheduled monuments, all of which are subjected to a five year rolling programme of inspection. This is not too problematic for the more accessible sites, close to HQ and situated by the side of a road... but for those sites situated close to the Scottish border, well away from anywhere and anyone, it can take up



Filming Tales from Northumberland with Robson Green at the Otterburn Ranges. Photo: © Phil Abramson.

to five years to organise the logistics for a site recce. I exaggerate of course, but there are those amongst the team who relish the remoteness and isolation of the far flung sites and rose to the challenge of the inspection.

One of the sites included in the survey was the Roman Camp at Burdhopecrag, close to the former Redesdale Camp, just off the A68 at Rochester. Roman camps were temporary defensive structures, constructed in enemy territory during the army's campaigning season. It is thought that a Camp could have been used for only a matter of days before it was abandoned when the army moved on. Visible clues to a Camp include a low earthen rampart and an outside ditch, but internal evidence is very sparse, probably because the army erected tents rather than buildings in the Camps. At first glance the Camp at Burdhopecrag appeared to be in good condition, but on closer inspection by the volunteers it was clear that the rampart was being eroded by sheep hunkering down for shelter from the winter storms. A team was assembled and the erosion scrapes were cleaned back, recorded and



Volunteers excavating at Burdhopecrag. © Phil Abramson.

then the rampart was re-instated. The end result is that a monument which could have been a candidate for the heritage at risk register has been conserved in perpetuity...or at least until the next flock of sheep decides to use it for a windbreak!

**Phil Abramson**  
DIO Archaeology Advisor

# Bradford Kaims Wetland Heritage Park

The Bamburgh Research Project is working with the local community and universities to investigate a truly remarkable ancient wetland site near the village of Lucker in north Northumberland, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic England. The Bamburgh Research Project began to investigate the landscape close to Bradford Kaims in 2009 as the area looked a promising candidate for prehistoric activity. Initial test-pitting and field walking quickly developed into excavation and ongoing evaluation.

The site is a series of glacial kaims (Scots kaim: a hill) rolling into an alkaline peat bog site at Newham Bog. The peat has created excellent conditions for preservation of organic material but the basin water level has been dropping over the last century resulting in the peat gradually drying out. This peat loss is the primary reason for evaluating the site.

The results so far have shown there is a vast amount of amazing archaeology with remains spanning the Mesolithic to Bronze Age periods. The preservation is breath-taking and the sheer amount of features



Trench 10 near end of season showing worked wood in abundance.

and artefacts is almost overwhelming. This is a brief roundup of the 2014 and 2015 seasons.

Kaims North is an investigation of a series of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age burnt mounds and an associated extensive, wooden platform area, which is well preserved by the peat.

In one trench (6) relationships between the platform and burnt mounds have emerged. There seem to be many phases to both features and they overlie each other. It is going to be a complicated process unpicking these relationships, but it provides an opportunity to use micro-stratigraphy to do the most in-depth analysis of a burnt mound sequence undertaken anywhere.

The burnt mound sequence has been totally excavated in places to reveal complex features, showing occupation and industrial activity from the Neolithic period. Several troughs are associated with the mounds and there are clear signs of Neolithic building remains beneath the mounds. Further work will be carried out into the way burnt mounds are created and the micro-activity that will allow us to interpret them better.

Another trench (10) was positioned to look at the prehistoric platform and identify how deep it is and what is made up from. Using a combination of excavation and coring, by Dr Richard Tipping of Stirling University, the platform was found to measure over 3m deep, and over 15m wide. It really is vast and heavily stratified and contains a huge amount of worked wood dating back to the Neolithic period.

Kaims South is an investigation of a Neolithic land surface as it runs down into a lake edge where the preservation is fantastic.

In one trench (9) excavation revealed a complex sequence of archaeology running from a Neolithic land surface down into a lake edge. There are hundreds of stake holes as well as well-preserved stakes and timbers. A circular structure was also discovered, measuring about 2m in diameter, which has initially been interpreted as a sweat lodge, similar to the



Kaims North excavations in 2015.



Trench 11 with well-preserved wood and a sand topped palaeochannel.

ones seen in North American First Nation sites; a nearby hearth and proximity of the water's edge are very compelling.

Further well-preserved wood was revealed in another trench (11); much of it is worked and there are hints of trackways running back towards the burnt mounds, or possible sweat lodge sites.

### Experimental Archaeology

This season has included a lot of experimental archaeology – brewing beer, baking almost edible bread, working flint tools and making tools from bone, all using prehistoric technology. Arguably the greatest success came from the woodworking where wooden wedges and a stone axe were used to split logs and make

a functioning copy of a paddle found in 2013.

### Community Archaeology

Over 100 community volunteers have been involved in the latest season, including young archaeologists. They are all from the local area and are dedicated and enthusiastic, turning up in all weathers. They really were a pleasure to have on site and contributed massively to the excavation and general on site atmosphere.

### Final thoughts...

Work will continue in 2016 and over the next few seasons it is hoped to complete the evaluation stage in order to assess how much

archaeology is here, what condition it is in and how we can best approach excavating, recording and protecting it. The importance of the site, together with ongoing gradual erosion from drainage works, means action is needed soon.

**Paul Gethin**  
**Bamburgh Research Project**

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[/bamburghmedia](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbamburghmedia)

**BLOG:**  
[bamburghresearchproject.wordpress.com](http://bamburghresearchproject.wordpress.com)

# In Search of Holystone Priory

## Introduction, by Jan Frazer

For several years the Holystone Archaeology Group has researched the location of the medieval nunnery which once stood in the village (HER 1211). From the few remaining documents it was known to have played an important role in Coquetdale from the 12th century, though fortunes dwindled towards its dissolution in 1539. The present church was substantially rebuilt in 1848, but throughout the village there are clues to something altogether grander, including elaborate grave slabs and worked stone in houses and stone walls. These accounts generally agree that the present church is situated on the site of the nunnery.

The group's investigations began in 2005 when a grant was received to work with a team from Durham University to carry out geophysical surveys to the north and south of the church; the results were, sadly, inconclusive.

However, the group's interest was revitalised in 2014 when the local gravedigger revealed parts of a large wall whilst digging a number of new graves, north of the church. The group was fortunate to be offered help by Andrew Wilson of DeepScan AR Ltd, to carry out ground penetrating radar of the site. Once the necessary consents had been obtained (the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument), Andrew spent several days scanning around the church. His scans revealed several interesting images on the south side of the church, which suggested possible priory walls.

The group then received grants from the Northumberland National Park Authority and Coquetdale Community Archaeology to carry out a small-scale excavation. In March 2015, about 15 people came each day for five days, the majority from



Probable east wall of an eastern claustral range in trench 3.

Holystone itself, and fortunately in good weather. Three trenches were dug in the areas that the radar had shown to look promising in the area south of the church, and by the first lunchtime parts of a huge wall were already emerging. The walls that came to light were all substantial and the work revealed a 2m long grave slab, decorated with a cross shaft. Some of the decoration on the grave slab had been worn away, probably by the passage of feet, suggesting it had been reused outside a blocked doorway. Dig director Richard Carlton believes that the substantial wall is likely to be a southwards continuation of the east end of the Priory Church, forming the external wall to an eastern cloistral range.

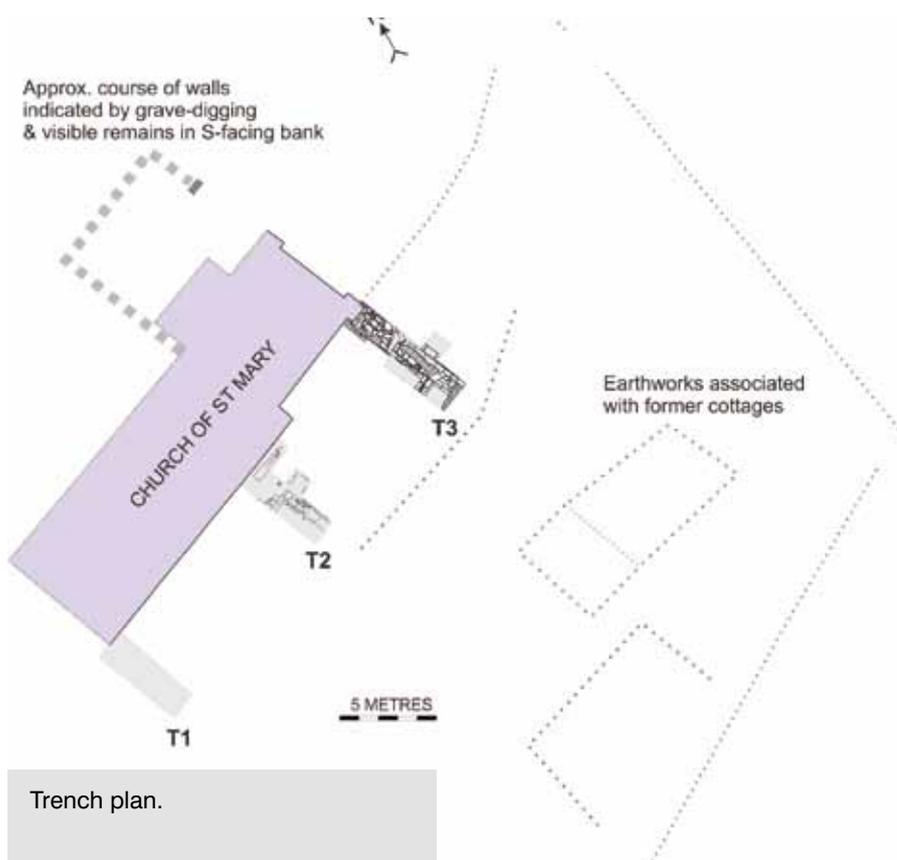
The dig was completed in its five-day window and everything tidily backfilled in order to preserve the remains.

## The Excavations, by Richard Carlton

The first trench extended from the south-west corner of the existing church and excavations exposed the nave wall below ground level. Here, the north side of a splayed door opening was revealed that comprised stone blocks with a door rebate; the door threshold had been removed together with the corresponding south side of the doorway, which must have once opened from the church into a room or passage running alongside



Medieval grave cover.



Trench plan.

– perhaps into the sacristy or a passage through the west range, or the north cloister walk.

The second trench was positioned against the south wall of the church, close to the east end of the current nave. Running north-south through the trench was a wall of well-tooled

sandstone ashlar, 0.52m wide and up to three courses high, sitting on a rough cobble foundation or levelling course. Though well-built with mortar bonding, the wall was poorly coursed and appeared to be made from reused blocks. It is thought to be of 18th century or

earlier date and perhaps associated with a post-medieval reconstruction of the church.

A drain found running beside the south wall of the current church could be associated with a narrow east-west wall, possibly the sleeper wall for the north cloister walk. The stone culvert comprised narrow flags set on edge, set on well-dressed (probably reused) flags with rougher capstones above.

North of the drain feature, at the same depth as the floor of the culvert, a medieval cross slab grave cover was discovered. Although the damaged east end of the slab remained under the baulk of the trench, it was possible to determine that its length was about 2.15m and that it was between 0.38 – 0.46m wide, with quite a broad incised cross shaft (95mm wide).

This trench also revealed a blocked doorway in the nave wall that measures 1.15m wide and whose jambs survive to a height of 1.6m. A door sill forming the lower part of the blocking may be original but appears somewhat incongruous. The doorway sits below but off-centre of a blocked two-light window, which in turn has been supplanted by a round-arched 19th-century window

# In Search of Holystone Priory

of vaguely Romanesque character.

A third trench extended from the south-east buttress of the chancel and excavation revealed a very substantial wall running north-south. It was built of large blocks of tooled sandstone with the upper course 0.90m wide, but stepped out by a series of projecting plinth and foundation courses making the base of the wall about 1.54m wide; the wall survived up to 0.95m deep. The wall is thought to be the east wall of an eastern claustral range, in line with the east end of the medieval church. A narrower east-west wall, only 0.59m wide, abutted it to the west and is likely to be associated with the schoolhouse building shown abutting the south side of the shortened church on the Tithe Plan of the 1840s.

As a result of this recent work another piece of the jigsaw has been found in the quest to piece together the layout and location of the medieval priory. Now, along with evidence from other observations, this suggests the presence of a parochial nave, known from the respond of its south aisle arcade at the south-west corner of the present church, and a Lady Chapel which is known from grave-digging on the north side of the church. In addition, the south claustral range may have been represented by a row of former cottages south of the church that were demolished in the late 19th century. Another, more-recently abandoned house on the north side of the row, may have been founded on remains of the Chapter House.

Based on this new information, an reconstruction drawing of the Priory as it may have appeared in the 14th century has been made, with the parish church and its tower at the west end of the complex, the Priory church east of

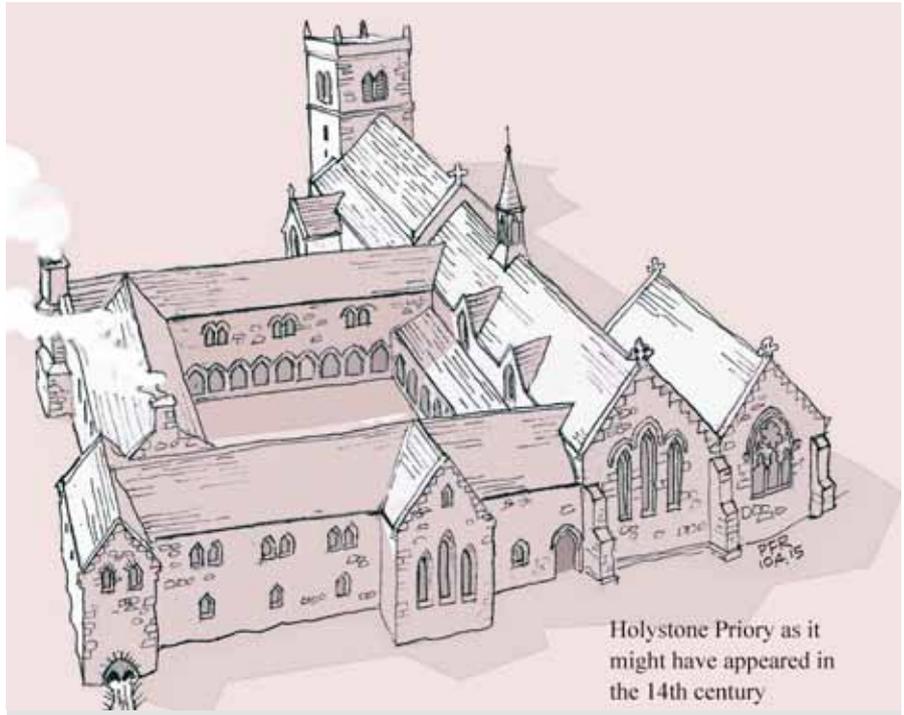


North-south post-medieval wall in Trench 2.

it with Lady Chapel attached to its north side and on its south side the cloister and conventual buildings.

So it appears the group has finally pinned down the Priory's exact location – which it publicised with a month-long display in the church and a public talk attended by 70 people on a grim wet night in July.

**Jan Frazer,**  
**Holystone Archaeology Group**  
**Richard Carlton,**  
**The Archaeological Practice Ltd**



Holystone Priory as it might have appeared in the 14th century

Reconstruction drawing of Holystone Priory, by Peter Ryder.



General view of excavations.

# Roman stones at West Uppertown Farm

In 2015 a number of Roman stones were recorded in farm buildings at West Uppertown Farm, Simonburn, including an unusual altar. The farm lies north of Hadrian's Wall about 1.5km from Turret 30A, 1.75km north-east of Carrawburgh Roman fort and 5km north-west of Chesters Roman fort. It is not known when the two buildings which incorporate the Roman stones were built but they appear to be of 19th century date.

The first stone is an altar built into a barn wall and latterly used as a chicken step. The altar was laid horizontally when the barn was built with the base incorporated into the wall and the capital projecting out to form the step. There is no discernible decoration on the visible part of the altar, although any decoration is likely to be in the body of the barn wall together with the die, on which any inscription might be carved. The damaged base of the altar is visible inside the barn allowing its height to be calculated as 740mm (width: 460mm and depth: 240mm). The altar is already recorded as RIB 1520 (<http://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/1520>); it was seen by Richard Wright in 1941 and presumed to have come originally from Carrawburgh.

The top of the altar has a bossed focus standing proud of the flanking bolsters (fig1) but the fronts of the bolsters are missing (fig2). An irregular lozenge-shaped plaque decorates the face of the capital with the higher upper section running up to the lip of the focus and the shorter lower section projecting down into the otherwise plain capital (fig3). So far no parallel has been found in Roman Britain for this feature, which takes the place of a pediment.

The second stone is built into another barn in the farm complex. It is a socket stone, possibly an altar base, which has been used as one of



Fig1 Bossed focus on top of altar standing proud of the flanking bolsters.  
Photo by L Allason-Jones



Fig2 Side view showing original right bolster.  
Photo by L Allason-Jones.

the foundation stones of an external stair (fig4). Only half of the stone survives and it measures: height: 280mm, width: 670mm, depth: 330mm. There is no evidence of decoration but the tool marks are still visible on the face. Although the socket measurements reflect those of the base of the altar described above it cannot be presumed that the one was supported by the other.

The same external staircase has also been built using at least 13 stones that resemble Roman voussoir stones (length: 65cm, widths: taper from 28cm to 22cm); more may be within the stair's structure. One has four straight tooled lines on one face; each line is about 70mm long and 5mm wide and has been made by a round-ended, iron tool (fig5). Some of the other stones have similar motifs but none as clearly. Dr Roger Tomlin visited the site but was unable to state whether these marks were intended to provide keying for mortar (although this is very different to diamond broaching) or were numeric quarry marks or guides to the builders.

There is the question as to where such voussoirs might have originated. A calculation by Loic Fields, a civil engineer with Ove Arup, confirms that, on the presumption that the arch is a constant radius and fills a full 180° the span covered would be about 4.5m. There would be some variation, given that the voussoirs are not precisely the same measurements and it is unknown if the joints would be mortared or not. The 4.5m calculation presumes 20mm mortaring; but 4.5m is an unusual span for Hadrian's Wall. The six voussoirs known from the Roman bridge at Chesters, the closest likely bridge over a watercourse to West Uppertown, have an average width of 43cm tapering to 35cm; the spans for the Chesters bridge have been calculated as 10.5m. Milecastle gates



Fig3 Original front face of the altar showing the unusual motif. Photo by L Allason-Jones.



Fig5 End of voussoir showing incised motif. Photo by L Allason-Jones.

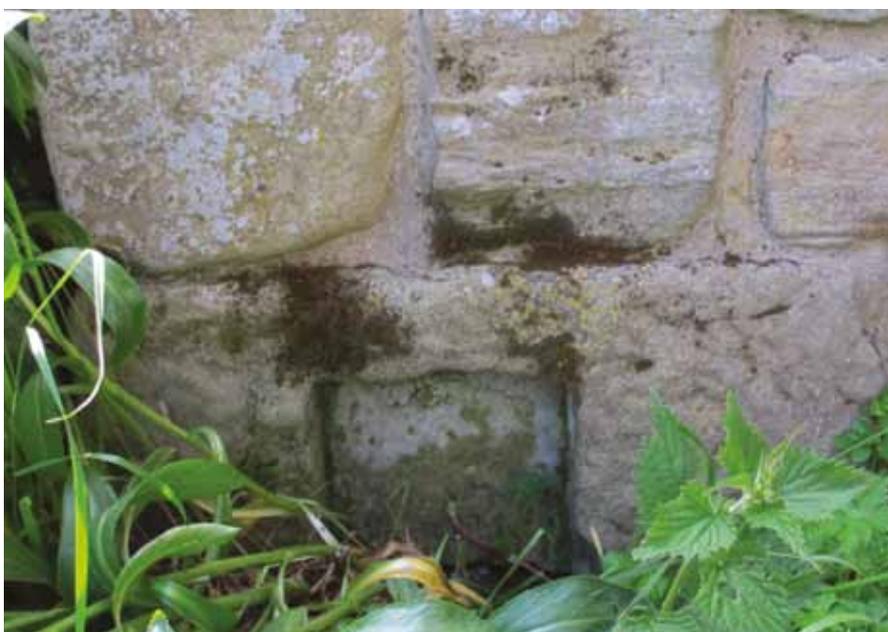


Fig4 Base stone showing the socket in the centre. Photo by L Allason-Jones.

have an average span of 3m – the north gate of Milecastle 37, for example, has a span of 3.1m. The outer entrance of the *principia* at Chesters measures 3m, whilst the inner entrance measures 3.25m. However, the distance between the piers of the cross hall in the basilica of the Chesters *principia* measure about 4m and a stone built within one of the piers has similar dimensions to those from West Uppertown. It is possible that the voussoirs under discussion could have come from a similar cross hall at Carrawburgh fort but the excavations of the *principia* at

Carrawburgh did not uncover that section of the building. It should be noted, however, that the overall dimensions of the internal buildings at Carrawburgh fort are smaller than those at Chesters.

The presumption is that the West Uppertown voussoirs came from the *principia* at Chesters but, in the absence of further proof, this must remain a presumption. A new English Heritage project on the loose stones at Chesters may reveal similar voussoirs from that exercise.

**Based on a report by Lindsay Allason-Jones**

# Portable Antiquities in Northumberland

In September 2014, the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) recorded its one millionth object and 906 of these have been found in Northumberland since January 2012. Most objects are still found by metal detectorists; however there are also many found by field walkers and even gardeners. The objects range in date from the Mesolithic period (about 10,000 BC to 4,000 BC) through to the post-medieval and modern periods. The object types range greatly and all can be seen on the Portable Antiquities Scheme website [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk).

Some of the oldest objects reported to the PAS are flint tools which date to the period about 9,000 to 3,450 BC and a group of them have been found in the Tyne Valley. Most of this group of objects are microliths which just means that they are very small worked stones and they were used together to create composite tools, mainly projectiles. There are also more obvious flint tools from the area including awls (DUR-6B4726) which were used to create holes in hides so that they could be sewn together.

Most of the objects on the PAS database are made of metal and some of the earliest metal objects are weapons which date to the Bronze Age including this spearhead (NCL-E6C2CE). It is one of only five from the county and dates to the period 1500 to 800 BC. It is nearly complete, however the blade would have originally been “leaf-shaped” and larger but, due to its long life span, the blade is now much smaller from repeated sharpening. It would have had a wooden shaft fitted in the socket and tied to the spearhead using the side loops.

The presence of Hadrian’s Wall in the county means that Roman objects are particularly significant. After coins, brooches are the most common Roman finds and the



A cast copper-alloy spearhead of Middle-Late Bronze Age  
(see <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/628877>).



A group of two flint awls of Mesolithic date (9000-3450 BC) from the Tyne Valley  
(see <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/740382>).

example shown (NCL-2B2544) is of a type known as a dragonesque. It is nearly complete with only part of the pin missing and, when first made, it would have been highly polished making it a very distinctive piece of jewellery. Brooches of this type are commonly found across the country but there is a concentration in the north of England and south of Scotland. This style is first used in the Iron Age; however it continues to be used into the Roman period. This is particularly interesting as the indigenous art style is found across Roman sites in Britain but often incorporates new techniques brought over from the Continent. Brooches are often used as markers for identity and the combination of the traditional styles with Roman techniques suggests a new sense of being Romano-British.

One of the most important finds to be reported in recent years is the Alnwick Sword (NCL-7EF795). The sword dates to the period around AD 550 to 650 and is made through a process called pattern welding. This technique uses strands of different iron alloys which are heated and adhered to the surface of the blade and once cleaned and polished, this produces an intricate pattern. Due to the skill needed for this process, the result is high status weapons. Later, this sword was heated in a furnace and folded over on itself before being buried. This adds to the significance of this object as it suggests that it was "ritually killed" before being buried in the ground. The obvious effort required for this process means that it was important for the sword to be taken out of circulation and not used any longer. There are many potential reasons for this and one possibility is that the owner died and so his sword was killed in order for it to accompany him in death. It is worth noting that the sword was not found in isolation, but near



An early Anglo-Saxon pyramidal mount from a sword-scabbard, made from cast gilded silver with garnet inlay (see <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/584446>).

to other objects of a similar date including a knife, some brooch fragments and a shield boss.

Sometimes, small objects can be just as informative and important as larger objects or hoards. In November 2013, an Anglo Saxon object (NCL-925284) was reported from north of Hexham. This small pyramid-shaped object turned out to be a silver sword mount with spaces on each side and the top for small garnets. Some of these are missing, however the ones that are still present show that underneath is a thin sheet of cross-hatched gold which shows through the stone. The back of the object is hollow with a bar running from one side to the other. It is unclear what these objects were used for but they were probably attached to a scabbard using a leather thong as an ostentatious show of wealth. These small scabbard mounts are not uncommon finds, with famous examples from the Sutton Hoo burial and the Staffordshire Hoard, however this is the first example to be reported to the PAS from Northumberland.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme is still recording finds from across



A cast copper-alloy dragonesque brooch of the early Roman period, dating around AD 50-175 (see <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/523573>).

England and Wales with a network of local Finds Liaison Officers. If you or someone you know has found an artefact that you would like to have identified or recorded, please contact your local Finds Liaison Officer, see PAS website: [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk).

**Lauren Proctor**  
Finds Liaison Officer

# New designations

A number of sites in the County have recently been recognised by Historic England as nationally important. They include an 18th century wreck site at Bamburgh, a Second World War and Cold War Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery at Gloucester Lodge, Blyth, prehistoric rock art panels (see p31), and a medieval monastic site in Berwick identified as Leonard's Nunnery. Each of these sites now enjoys protection as a Scheduled Monument.

More information about all these sites can be found in the English Heritage Designation Yearbook 2013-2104

(<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/designation-yearbook-2013-14/>) and on the National Heritage List (<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>)

EW



**The Bamburgh wreck was revealed after severe weather in June 2013.** The wooden vessel is of carvel construction and lay buried in the sand. Tree-ring studies of some of the timbers indicate that the vessel was probably built in, or shortly after, 1768. By early 2014 the wreck had been reclaimed by the sand and no trace remained exposed. Painting by Thomas Bush Hardy RBA 1842-97.



**St Leonard's Nunnery site,** Berwick-upon-Tweed was founded in 1140 by King David of Scotland. Although little can be seen of the site today, its remains have been recorded from aerial photographs, geophysics and excavation. The nunnery was sacked after the Scottish defeat at the Battle of Halidon Hill in 1333 and appears never to have recovered. Photograph: Alan Williams



**Gloucester Lodge** was one of only a few Second World War sites retained as part of the Nucleus Force and adapted for Cold War use. It was adapted and re-modelled in 1946 and the physical remains that survive today are dominated by the Cold War remodelling. Aerial photograph of Gloucester Lodge Battery (BKS 18400 1960).

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